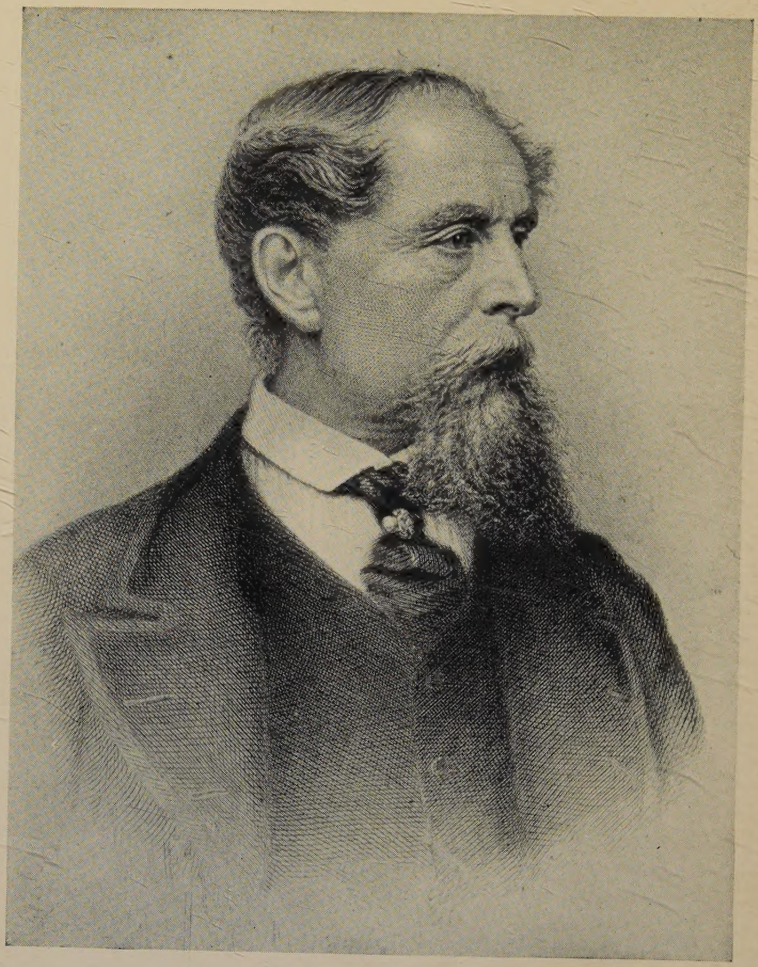
THE MAN CHARLES DICKENS

A Victorian Portrait



CHARLES DICKENS AT 56
From an engraving after a photograph by Gurney, New York

The Man Charles Dickens

A Victorian Portrait

BY

EDWARD WAGENKNECHT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GAMALIEL BRADFORD

And with Illustrations

BOSTON AND NEW YORK

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1929

Wingate College Library

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The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS
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TO
MY MOTHER

13067

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INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHY AND HAYSTACKS

By Gamaliel Bradford

Biography is the orderly and systematic narrative which follows the chronological current of a life. If the biographer is an artist, all the elements necessary to build up the complete character of the subject are interwoven with this narrative, so that in the end the total of speech and action develops a complete likeness and portraiture of the animating soul. But the danger of biography is digression, irrelevance, and the chronological movement almost necessarily involves large sweeps of connected issues of every kind, which in the hands of any but the most skilled practitioner are almost sure to imperil the clarity and continuity of psychological exposition.

Psychography discards chronology, does not concern itself in any way with the sequence of external fact, except in so far as such is absolutely necessary to make clear the background. It concerns itself wholly with the essential elements of character, endeavors to establish these by all possible varied evidence of all sorts, to disentangle them from the ephemeral and inconsequential, and to bring them out with such emphasis of contrast and climax as will at least enforce the reader's attention and hold his interest. Whether it compels entire agreement is another and quite a secondary matter.

In his study of Dickens the man, Mr. Wagenknecht has produced a most effective portrait, applying all the resources

of psychography as a complicated science and all its possibilities as a creative art. He has in the first place fully realized and amply developed the background, as he sees it, that much-abused and in many respects conventional, but also vital and many-colored Victorian world, of which Dickens was so constantly and so inseparably a part, and he has brought out the living, active figures with whom Dickens interacted in that world. He has further interrogated all these witnesses, with patient and loving fidelity, and made them yield him all the external evidence available as to the complex qualities of his subject. Coming to a closer inwardness, he has made a minute and detailed analysis of Dickens's vast work, not with the object of literary criticism, for with this psychography has nothing to do, but simply for the rich light that the work supplies as to the soul of the author. Finally, making the last possible approach to the spiritual center, he has examined all of Dickens's own personal utterance that the record supplies, the spoken word, so far as it may be relied upon with the credibility of sufficient witnesses, and still more, the numerous letters, always the best vehicle of testimony as to how a man lived and what he was.

Mr. Wagenknecht has woven together all this scientifically collected and carefully weighed material with the skill of the psychographic artist. In a series of chapters, dealing for example with Dickens and his relation to his art, with Dickens in everyday life, with an accumulation of possible charges of failure and defect, with the man's spiritual life and his relation to God, and so forth, he has massed and arranged this accumulated material of evidence in such a way as to produce the greatest amount of impression and effect,

and it should be noted that in this massing and arranging, and the elaborate process of selection that must precede it, lies the most difficult portion of the psychographer's art. His success or failure depends upon his ability to select, to mass, and to arrange, and, although the reader may not be aware of the obstacles that are overcome, the psychographer is sweatingly aware of them, and knows that only by overcoming them can he enthrall and absorb the reader's interest to the extent that he aims and hopes.

The collective result of Mr. Wagenknecht's distillation is unquestionably a definite figure, a thoroughly human figure, with numerous undisputed defects, but a figure of genius, and a lofty figure and a lovable one. Having had some experience in psychography, I ask myself whether, if I were to attempt a portrait of Dickens, the result would be like Mr. Wagenknecht's, and I answer at once that it would not. For reasons too long to analyze here, almost all the Victorians are antipathetic to me, and none is more so than Dickens. If I were making a psychograph of him, my keynote would be that, in spite of his undeniable vigor and power, his whole work lacked veracity. I should, then, with all the aid of evidence that Mr. Wagenknecht uses, but applying and probably distorting it to suit my view, endeavor to trace and establish this strain of inveracity in the man himself, carrying it back, as it seems to me, into the essential conditions and character of the English period in which he lived. This portrait would, as I said, be very different in effect from Mr. Wagenknecht's. But it by no means follows that mine would be true and his would not, any more than I should be willing to admit the contrary. The point simply is, that psychography — and biography

— have infinite possibilities. You may have a dozen different portraits, all taken from different points of view, all true and all false, but all helping to complete the permanent image of the subject and, what is most important of all, tending to stimulate spiritual activity and energy in those who read.

It is said of a great French painter that he could paint a dozen pictures of the same haystack, all different, all giving a different conception of the subject, and all leaving the subject unexhausted. The human soul has more varied phases, more astonishing, bewildering, fascinating aspects, than many haystacks. The object of the art of painting is to reopen the spiritual eye, to make the beholder see haystacks — and other things — with all the illimitable wealth of suggestion and mystery. In the same way the object of psychography is to develop the passion for souls, to fix the reader's attention more intensely upon the elusive, the inevitable, the insoluble, the ever-enthralling problem of life.

GAMALIEL BRADFORD

THE MAN CHARLES DICKENS

Dog Ears!

THE MAN CHARLES DICKENS

* * *

CHAPTER I

ORIENTATION

I

'When a great man departs from us,' wrote Sir Arthur Helps, just after the death of Dickens, 'what we desire to know about him is not so much what he did, as what he was.' [1] I am not sure that the critics of 1870 would, all of them, have agreed with Sir Arthur's emphasis, but there can be little doubt that every change in aim and method which has been effected since has brought the writing of biography closer to his ideal.

In the beginning, however, it was what Dickens did that became the immediate subject of careful and laborious chronicle. And this was both right and necessary, for before any valid interpretation could be made, it was absolutely essential that every available fact should become a matter of record. To John Forster above all others, to Robert Langton, and to such later writers as Frederic G. Kitton and B. W. Matz, whose indefatigable researches have placed at the disposal of Dickensians much valuable material which might otherwise have remained uncollected, all future students of the novelist will always remain indebted.

But to-day it seems as if it might be time to essay another approach. Every phase of Dickens's life has by now become the subject of minute chronicle. There is a volume on

'Dickens and Music,' slight as his contact with that art would seem to have been, and recently the president of the Boston Branch of the Dickens Fellowship has made a sizable volume out of his two brief visits to Boston alone. To be sure, there is considerable personalia that has not yet been printed, including some material that seems to be withheld deliberately by the Dickens family. Yet, if one may judge by the stray bits that do trickle into print from time to time, or even by the recent biographies — friendly and unfriendly — that have been based more or less on this unpublished material, one may well be inclined to doubt whether any of it, when it does ultimately make its appearance, will in any way fundamentally alter our conception of Dickens's character.

In this book, I have therefore attempted a study of the soul of Dickens. The essential elements are scattered through hundreds of repetitious volumes, most of them no longer available to the general reader. But so far as I know, this is the first time an attempt has been made to bring the scattered material together, to pass it as it were through an alembic, and to build up a picture of the man Dickens uncluttered by biographical detail and critical observation alike.

The task, difficult as it is, is the more tempting because a new method of analysis has recently come into our literary life. This is the method of psychography, invented by my dear friend, Mr. Gamaliel Bradford, and practiced by him with such distinguished success during the last seventeen years.* His books have had a marked influence on the renascence of biography which is so characteristic a feature

* See Appendix, 'A Note on the Method of This Book.'

of the literary activity of our day, yet there is no other biographer who has definitely tried to use his method. I certainly am under no delusions as to my ability in any sense to rival the uncanny skill with which he has worked. But I was curious to apply the psychographic method to the great wealth of Dickensian material, curious also to see what effects if any might be secured through it by other hands than those of its originator.

II

Before proceeding to the analysis, let us remind ourselves briefly of the life experience of this extraordinary man.

Dickens was born at Landport, a suburb of Portsea, February 7, 1812. His father was John Dickens, a clerk in the Navy Pay Office, an amiable, shiftless man whose principal contribution toward the education of his son seems to have been that he taught him by his own example how important money is in the world and how difficult it is to get along without it. This was true in Portsmouth and in Chatham, but it was even truer in London, where John Dickens was thrown into prison for debt while his son spent his days pasting labels on bottles in a blacking warehouse. Charles seems to have been at this time an abnormally sensitive child with some dim prescience of what was in store for him, and he suffered terribly, not only from his uncomfortable surroundings, but even more from the consciousness that he was having no opportunity to develop his capacities and — worst of all — that nobody cared. In the course of time, a legacy brought this slavery to an end, and Dickens was enrolled in a private school which was probably no better than it should have been.

Keen as his suffering was during the blacking-house period, the experience must be counted an important element in the preparation of the novelist. When he came in later years to write of the London poor, he did not need to go among them in search of 'local color': all that he needed was to delve down into his memory, and there was his for the asking that 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' which Wordsworth considered the foundation of literary art. And though he was perhaps somewhat sentimental at the time in his attitude toward his own sufferings, yet it must still be admitted that he made the best possible use of them ever afterward, in that they awakened his sensitiveness, both in art and in life, for the sufferings of others. At the same time, the experience contributed to the strength and independence of his character, for once the first flush of shame was past, he realized that he could never look himself in the face again unless, in this terrible place, he were able to do his work as well as the best of them. In other words, the blacking warehouse taught him very early the importance of standing on his own feet.

When he was fifteen years old, Dickens left school and secured employment as a clerk in a lawyer's office. By night he studied shorthand, struggling to fit himself for the position of newspaper reporter. To this task he devoted himself with that whole-hearted devotion so characteristic of him in all his undertakings, and the result was that within a few years he was a highly successful Parliamentary reporter. He himself wrote of this time, 'I have often transcribed for the printer, from my shorthand notes, important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely

compromising, writing on the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern, in a post-chaise and four, galloping through a wild country, and through the dead of the night, at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour.' [2] This work also was of the utmost importance to him: it took him out of the poor little circle in which he had lived hitherto and gave him an insight into the larger world of men and affairs. His intimate knowledge of roads and taverns, so conspicuous in his novels, dates from this period, and apparently he began thus early to acquire one of his most marked prejudices — his dislike of lawyers and of all that pertains to the machinery of government. The spiritual reflex was, if anything, even more significant: he had now established himself; he had done something; he could afford to look the world in the face. This period marks also the development of his interest in the theater, always one of the abiding passions of his life, and, as we shall see later, a great influence on his work. His love of reading, especially of the 'Arabian Nights' and the eighteenth-century novelists, had already awakened.

When he was eighteen, Dickens fell in love with Maria Beadnell, a banker's daughter, of whom we shall have much to say hereafter. The affair terminated unhappily, but here again Dickens had squeezed some good out of an unpleasant experience, for it was under the inspiration of his love for Maria that he began to write, his first sketch, 'A Dinner at Poplar Walk' (now known as 'Mr. Minns and his Cousin,' and included in the 'Sketches by Boz'), appearing first in the 'Old Monthly Magazine' for December, 1833.

Dickens's real career as an author began, however, in 1836, when the publishing house of Chapman and Hall

suggested to him that he write the letterpress for a series of humorous plates, mostly of a sporting character, by the popular artist, Robert Seymour. Dickens and Seymour did not wholly agree with regard to the relative importance of the author and the artist in this undertaking, and fortunately for Dickens and for English literature, Seymour's death by his own hand, shortly after the publication of the second number, left Dickens free to work out the development of 'The Pickwick Papers' in his own way, and with the rather more docile assistance of the young Hablot K. Browne ('Phiz') whose pictures were later to be associated with so much of his best work. At first 'Pickwick' seemed to be taking on slowly, but from the introduction of Sam Weller in an early number, the success of the work was assured, and it was not long before it had assumed the proportions of a sensation. Dickens himself had known from the first that it would be a success, for he had confidently married Miss Catherine Hogarth, virtually at the moment the first number was on the stalls.

'Pickwick' was the work of a master humorist, firmly based upon the type of humorous literature popular at the time. Dickens's next novel, 'Oliver Twist,' connected itself instead with the early nineteenth-century interest in stories of crime and of criminals. It was much more serious in purpose, tracing as it did the fortunes of a poor parish boy in his life among thieves, and it contained by implication a strong warning against the crime-breeding conditions which a complacent national conscience allowed to exist in the London slums. This sociological, didactic interest grows steadily with Dickens from now on — it is even more marked in his next book, 'Nicholas Nickleby,' an attack on

brutal schoolmasters and on private schools — though it is not until after 'Bleak House' that it encroaches seriously upon his humor. Following 'Nickleby,' his next project was a miscellany, 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' but the comparative indifference of the public to this venture, combined with Dickens's own growing interest in 'The Old Curiosity Shop,' which had originally been designed as a short story for the miscellany, led to an abandonment of practically all the 'Clock' machinery at an early stage, and the consequent development of the story of Little Nell and her grandfather into a full-length novel. As a result, 'The Old Curiosity Shop' and 'Barnaby Rudge,' the first of his two essays in historical fiction, came to make up the bulk of the modified 'Clock.'

Through all this time Dickens had been growing in fame, in friendship, and in worldly prosperity. Four children had been born; he had been fêted in Edinburgh; he had moved to Devonshire Terrace; he had made frequent excursions to Broadstairs and elsewhere. Now, after long consideration, came in 1842 his first visit to America, an event which, although it had been eagerly anticipated, and although he and Mrs. Dickens received a positively riotous welcome, can hardly be said to have completely satisfied either the novelist or his hosts. For Dickens's ideal of America had been far too high. In place of the clean country, where human life could begin again on a firmer, purer basis, he found a place where many of the abuses of the Old World had already taken root, and alongside of them much of the coarseness and crudeness that always characterizes a new country. Nor did the refusal of the Americans to listen to his plea for an international copyright law increase his respect for them.

He went home and wrote his 'American Notes,' which to-day seems a rather dull but eminently fair book, but which at the time caused thousands to feel that in Charles Dickens they saw a reincarnation of Æsop's serpent who stung the breast that had warmed him, and ill-feeling was only increased when 'Martin Chuzzlewit' appeared, with its somewhat cruel caricatures of obnoxious American types. 'Chuzzlewit' was considered by many critics, however, the finest novel he had yet written, and Mrs. Gamp at once took her place in the immortal company that includes Sir John Falstaff and the Wife of Bath. A much happier event of the time was the publication of the first Christmas book, 'A Christmas Carol.' Even to-day it remains, in the words of Mr. A. Edward Newton, 'The Greatest Little Book in the World.'

There followed years of manifold activities. Between 1844 and 1847, Dickens and his family were much abroad — in Italy, in Switzerland, and in Paris. 'Dombey and Son' and more Christmas books were the literary fruits of these years. As in 'Martin Chuzzlewit,' departing somewhat from his usual formula, he had attacked not a public wrong but a private vice — selfishness, so here in 'Dombey,' he aimed his shafts at another — pride. In 1847, too, Dickens's theatrical interests burst forth again in an amateur production of 'Every Man in His Humour,' undertaken for the benefit of Leigh Hunt. Dickens managed the affair and played Bobadil, finding the whole experience so much to his liking that he indulged in many similar performances for pleasure and for charity during the succeeding years. In 1849, he found at last the successful journalistic venture for which he had sought so long. Three years earlier, he had

Lausanne.

Thirty first August 1846

My Dear Lever.

I may write without the "Sir" though I can't come to Zurich I can't get so far, at all events.

Your second hospitable letter should have been answered long ago, but that I have been pondering all sorts of probabilities and possibilities. An excursion to Chamounix, however, and another to the Great St Bernard — coupled with the invasions, past and to come, of people coming through here — have so encroached upon my time that I have now no choice but to put a grim face on all proposals of pleasure, and sit down, fiercely at my desk.

Nevertheless, if, after Christmas and towards the Spring time I should be anything like as free as I hope to be (by comparison with my approaching bondage) I shall still look forward to the pleasure of shaking hands with you bodily.

In the meanwhile I must content myself with a more spiritual but not less hearty salutation

always Faithfully Yours

Charles Dickens

— I forgot — New Work — Name, Domberg and Son — Scene, English — Opening in London.

injudiciously accepted an offer to become the editor of a daily newspaper, an odious task as it proved, and one from which he was soon able to relieve himself through the kindness of his friend John Forster. Now, however, he issued the first number of his personally conducted weekly journal, 'Household Words,' which was a great success. Dickens killed 'Household Words' in 1858, when he broke with his publishers, but his new periodical, 'All the Year Round,' carried on the same interests, and this he continued to edit until he died. Between 1850 and 1852, a large share of his energy went to the Guild of Literature and Art, an abortive organization with the ambitious design of establishing the professions of art and letters upon a somewhat firmer financial basis.

The other events in Dickens's life up to 1858 were the publication dates of his various books. In 1850 came the great autobiographical novel, 'David Copperfield.' This was followed, in order, by 'Bleak House,' a huge and ambitious project, involving an attack on the Court of Chancery, in which Dickens for the first time achieved a pervasive plot; 'Hard Times,' a short and extremely Carlylean novel, a little hard in its realism and eminently un-Dickensian; and 'Little Dorrit,' a long, heavy novel involving imprisonment for debt and many other social problems. 'Little Dorrit,' indeed, marks the height of Dickens's sociological interest, but those who thought it indicated that the fire had gone out of their favorite novelist with his youth had a surprise in store for them when 'A Tale of Two Cities' appeared a few years later. This great historical novel of the French Revolution did not indeed go back to the 'Nickleby' pattern. The theme is serious, even somber,

and there is comparatively little humor, but the vigor and vividness of the narrative betray no signs of weariness.

Meanwhile, however, there had occurred, in 1858, one of the most sensational events of Dickens's life, his separation from his wife. This great crux is discussed in detail in a later chapter and need not therefore be considered here. For the moment, at least, the sense of relief which followed the resolving of an intolerable domestic situation seems to have manifested itself in a burst of new energy, not only in the 'Tale,' but in the new work which Dickens now assumed — that of giving public readings from his own works. It is safe to say that no human being has ever won such a triumph as a public reader as did Dickens. Throughout England, in Paris, and in the United States, where he made a tour in 1868, he was received with the acclaim that is usually reserved for a great prima donna. Indeed, for how many prima donnas will people stand in line all night to buy tickets as they did for Dickens in America? By this time he had acquired the country house at Gadshill Place, near Rochester, which he had loved ever since his childhood, and where his estranged wife's sister, Georgina Hogarth, was an efficient housekeeper and a faithful friend. All in all, he was probably happier than he had been for some years.

He had two more novels to write: 'Great Expectations,' another narrative on the autobiographical plan, and 'Our Mutual Friend,' his last elaborated full-length book. In 'Our Mutual Friend,' the weariness evident in 'Little Dorrit' and 'Hard Times' may be seen creeping back upon him. He died over 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood,' in which he had staked everything upon a secret which nobody has ever been able to solve.

The last readings had cruelly drained Dickens's physical resources. He was a sick man in America, and when he returned to England his physicians were forced to interfere with the reading programme he had mapped out for himself. Restless, eager, ambitious, he drove himself madly to the end. On the eighth of June, 1870, he did not stop writing at one o'clock as was his custom, but worked on through the afternoon until dinner time. During the meal he suffered a stroke. Twenty-four hours later he was dead.

III

Before proceeding definitely to the psychography of Dickens, it is interesting and amusing to speculate on just what his own attitude toward this sort of inquiry would be. On first consideration, he seems completely discouraging: he stands on his rights as a private gentleman, and his family has scrupulously respected them to this day. But Dickens is no longer a private gentleman. I am by no means sure that he himself quite realized that interest in him and his works would survive into the period when he should have ceased to be 'the late Mr. Dickens' and become the property of the world. If he did have any such vision of fame, he surely failed to perceive how important the relation between his life and his work would appear in that day. Students of nineteenth-century personalia have groaned often enough over that terrible bonfire of September, 1860, when Dickens ruthlessly destroyed the correspondence of twenty years, 'expressly because I considered it had been held with me, and not with the public, and because I could not answer for its privacy being respected when I should be dead.' [3]

Wingate College Library

Others, fortunately for psychography, were not quite so conscientious with regard to the letters he had written them, and he himself must have realized that there was an enormous wealth of self-revelation here, as well as in his published writings. The sentimental Hans Christian Andersen was quite sure of this. 'Take the best out of all Dickens's writings,' he said, 'make from them the picture of the man, and you have Charles Dickens.'[4] I am afraid this method would cause that strange creature, the modern iconoclastic biographer, to throw his hands up in the air. Dickens himself speaks twice of the possibility of his writings being used to study his own personality — once in 'Somebody's Luggage,' and again, in his own person, in a public address. The first passage is dramatic and of course wholly inconclusive, but it is entertaining and suggestive: 'My works are well known. . . . You have seen my works many a time, though it's fifty thousand to one if you have seen me. You say you don't want to see me? You say your interest is in my works, and not in me? Don't be too sure about that. Stop a bit.'[5] The other statement is more definite. Speaking at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1842, he said: 'It has often been observed, that you cannot judge of an author's personal character from his writings. It may be that you cannot. I think it very likely, for many reasons, that you cannot. But, at least, a reader will rise from the perusal of a book with some defined and tangible idea of the writer's moral creed and broad purposes.'[6]

This may seem still discouraging, but is this as far as we can go? Readers of 'David Copperfield' may be expected to know better. It has been urged often enough that 'David Copperfield' is not the autobiography of Dickens. And it

is well that it should be urged further until certain persons come to realize both that Dickens was an artist and that the art of fiction is not a kind of glorified reporting. But Dickens's personality is in every line of 'David Copperfield,' nevertheless, and it was on this account that he always loved it more than any other of his books. Percy Fitzgerald, who knew him well, tells us that 'He was ever longing to express his own feelings, opinions, even recollections of his childhood, which were his grand storehouse. He felt that everything of value that he had to say really came from his own personality, and that therefore it must be genuine.'[7] Francesco Berger, another friend, goes even further: 'To read his books is to know the man; there is little in Dickens that his books do not reveal.'[8] Finally, in 'Great Expectations,' Dickens himself carries the discussion quite as far as I require when he appeals directly to the reader's understanding of Pip on the basis of what the reader himself is: 'Why I hoarded up this last wretched little rag of the robe of hope that was rent and given to the winds, how do I know! Why did you who read this, commit that not dissimilar inconsistency of your own, last year, last month, last week?'[9]

From this point, we may go on to the psychography of Dickens.

CHAPTER II

DICKENS AS ARTIST

I

SINCE the world remembers Charles Dickens first of all as a novelist, and since by far the larger share of his conscious thought and energy was invested in his work, it will be appropriate to consider him first of all in this aspect, always remembering, however, that we are here interested in Dickens's art, not for its own sake, but only in so far as it illuminates his personality.

One who comes to Dickens fresh from reading the many pronunciamentos on the art of fiction which our contemporary novelists are in the habit of giving us, is likely to be struck first of all by the absence of any such detailed self-conscious analysis on his part. Henry James, who illustrates the self-conscious artist in fiction if anybody does, felt this very strongly in the case of Dickens, and was torn all his life between his appreciation of the winning humanity of Dickens's work and his uneasy conviction of its artistic lawlessness.[1] Certainly any such minute self-dissection as we find scattered through the prefaces of the New York edition of James would have seemed to Dickens both futile and unnecessary.

> It is as if the rose should pluck herself,
> Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom;
> As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
> Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom.

It will be remembered that David Copperfield does not discuss his own fictions in his autobiography, believing that if

his work has been well done, they may be trusted to speak for themselves and that if they are bad, no amount of discussion can save them.[2] In his own prefaces, Dickens repeatedly expresses the same point of view.[3]

But it would be very easy to make Dickens's attitude toward his own fictions seem altogether too naïve. After all, novels didn't 'jes' grow' in the nineteenth century any more than they do in the twentieth: indeed, long before Dickens's time, Fielding had discussed the art of the novelist in some detail. Dickens considered himself fully possessed of the artistic temperament — 'the wayward and unsettled feeling which is part . . . of the tenure on which one holds an imaginative life,' [4] and he believed firmly 'that an artist (of whatever denomination) may perhaps be trusted to know what he is about in his vocation. . . .' [5]

He was completely in earnest about it. For the merely fashionable novel he had only contempt, and he was always quick to resent any suggestion that the novelist was merely an entertainer.[6] His imperfect sympathy with Thackeray was determined largely by an instinctive resentment against the brother novelist's somewhat superior and aristocratic air toward 'the art that he held in trust.' [7] And the Philistine attitude toward artists as irresponsible people — 'a set of helpless babies, who are to be held up by the chin' — always irritated him intensely: himself he thought of them 'as an energetic and persevering class of men, whose incomes depend on their own faculties and personal exertions,' and 'who in their vocation render good service to the community.' [8]

Earnestness as such is, of course, a moral rather than an artistic quality. But in Dickens it frequently took the form

of a careful consideration of technical problems. Once, on going back after many years to 'The Bride of Lammermoor,' he was shocked by 'the clumsy shifts and inartistic treatment of the machinery.' [9] In his own work he tried hard to avoid such things. 'As to the planning out from week to week, nobody can imagine what the difficulty is, without trying. But, as in all such cases, when it is overcome, the pleasure is proportionate.' [10]

It must not be forgotten, however, that all Dickens's novels were published first in serial parts, and that he, in writing them, was never very far ahead of the printer. The effect of this mode of publishing on the structure of his work is a subject which deserves much more careful study than it has yet received: I can do no more than allude to it here. That the method possessed disadvantages on the score of continuity, he was fully aware. Problems arose which would never have arisen otherwise, such problems, for example, as are suggested in one of the unpublished letters to Charles Lever, written at the time when 'A Day's Ride' was running through 'All the Year Round': 'The only suggestion I have to make (and that arises solely out of the *manner* of publication) is, that we ought to get all the action of the story, in the first No [number], and that I therefore would, by a little condensation there, and a little enlargement of the quantity given in the first week, get at the invitation to the dinner, *as the end to the first weekly part.*' [11]

Primarily, it may be said, the serial publication made for a certain looseness of structure, necessarily resultant from the possibility of starting with no definite plan, or else of continually introducing modifications in the plan originally formulated. This was perhaps most notable in the case of

'Chuzzlewit,' which, as first designed, did not include the American trip at all, and Forster testifies that the difficulties encountered in this story caused Dickens in later works to be much more careful, both in planning and in adhering to his plan.[12] In 'The Old Curiosity Shop' it was not at first intended that Little Nell should die.[13] 'Bleak House,' much later, was considerably influenced by a pamphlet on Chancery abuses not published until after the second number had been written.[14]

Practically, then, with regard to details at least, Dickens was compelled to think in terms of serial units rather than in terms of the novel as a whole. Furthermore, while he wrote slowly, carefully, 'he never rewrote what a morning's work had ultimately produced.'[15] Within the monthly parts, however, quantities had to be meticulously apportioned, and it must be admitted that in general Dickens made such adjustments with considerable skill.

II

So far as the evidence will permit, it will be interesting to trace certain aspects of Dickens's critical theory and practice somewhat more closely. Sometimes, as with 'Chuzzlewit' or 'Dombey,' he began with a bare idea — Selfishness or Pride. Sometimes the starting-point was more material, as in the case of 'Our Mutual Friend,' which launched out from certain waterside handbills describing persons who had been drowned in the river. To this beginning one element of the story after another attached itself, yet for a long time the scenario would not come. 'Edwin Drood' started with a vague vision of character: 'What should you think of the idea of a story beginning in this way? — Two

people, boy and girl, or very young, going apart from one another, pledged to be married after many years — at the end of the book. The interest to arise out of the tracing of their separate ways, and the impossibility of telling what will be done with that impending fate.' [16] Sometimes an idea would spring up out of nowhere. 'Why I found myself so "used up" after "Hard Times" I scarcely know, perhaps because I intended to do nothing in that way for a year, when the idea laid hold of me by the throat in a very violent manner. . . .' [17] And there could hardly be a better illustration than 'Doctor Marigold's Prescriptions' of what Henry James called 'the suddenly determined absolute of perception': 'Tired with "Our Mutual," I sat down to cast about for an idea, with a depressing notion that I was, for the moment, overworked. Suddenly, the little character that you will see, and all belonging to it, came flashing up in the most cheerful manner, and I had only to look on and leisurely describe it.' [18]

In general, Dickens may be said to have accepted the fiction of the omniscient author which was the orthodox convention of his day. Quite indiscriminately, he enters into the minds of all his characters whenever it is convenient to do so. He makes fun of this in 'Barnaby Rudge,' makes fun of it and yet at the same time accepts it: 'Chroniclers are privileged to enter where they list, to come and go through keyholes, to ride upon the wind, to overcome, in their soarings up and down, all obstacles of distance, time, and place. Thrice blessed be this last consideration, since it enables us to follow the disdainful Miggs even into the sanctity of her chamber, and to hold her in sweet companionship through the dreary watches of the night!' [19] Yet it is interesting to

see how close Dickens came, now and then, half-consciously, to the conception of a 'point of view,' so important in contemporary fiction. 'I have no doubt that a great part of Fielding's reason for the introduced story, and Smollett's also, was, that it is sometimes really impossible to present, in a full book, the idea it contains (which yet it may be on all accounts desirable to present), without supposing the reader to be possessed of almost as much romantic allowance as would put him on a level with the writer. In Miss Wade I had an idea, which I thought a new one, of making the introduced story so fit into surroundings impossible of separation from the main story, as to make the blood of the book circulate through both.' [20] Even more suggestive is Forster's description of the original idea for 'Drood': 'The story... was to be that of the murder of a nephew by his uncle; the originality of which was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself at the close, when its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted.' [21] Just on the edge, you see.

In spite of the highly plotted character of the Dickens novels, it is evident that their creator was more interested in characterization than in any other phase of his work. Turgenieff's principle, so influential in modern criticism of fiction, that the writer should begin with the characters and not with the plot, he would have sympathized with perfectly. Once he had invented his puppets and set them going, he felt that it was their task to tell the story and not his. 'My notion always is, that when I have made the people to play out the play, it is, as it were, their business to do it, and not mine.' [22]

Often, of course, he found a character growing under his hands. 'Given what one knows, what one does not know springs up; and I am as absolutely certain of its being true, as I am of the law of gravitation — if such a thing be possible, more so.' [23] When it was necessary, he did not hesitate to allow the character to take the lead. 'If you want your public to believe in what you write you must believe in it yourself. When I am describing a scene I can as distinctly see what I am describing as I can see you now. So real are my characters to me that on one occasion I had fixed upon the course which one of them was to pursue. The character, however, got hold of me and made me do exactly the opposite to what I had intended; but I was so sure that he was right and I was wrong that I let him have his own way.' [24]

III

No aspect of Dickens's critical theory is more interesting or more significant for the revelation of his character than his attitude toward realism. When he began writing, he aimed simply to reproduce things and people that he had seen.[25] To the end of his life, he never wholly relinquished this practice. Before writing 'Nicholas Nickleby' he paid a visit to Yorkshire and its schools. When preparing for 'Hard Times,' he visited Preston, expressly to observe the effects of a strike in a manufacturing town.[26] Similarly, he went to Bevis Marks in 'Curiosity Shop' days, 'to look at a house for Sampson Brass,' [27] and before writing of Magwitch's attempted escape in 'Great Expectations,' he actually hired a steamer and plied for a day between Blackwell and Southend.[28] 'His last visit to Rochester was on Monday

the 6th June, 1870, when he walked over from Gadshill, accompanied by his dogs. On this occasion he was seen by several persons leaning on the fence in front of Restoration House, and apparently examining the old mansion with great care. It was remarked at the time that there would be some notice of this building in the tale then current, and nothing was more likely, for on the following day Tuesday, or possibly Wednesday, we find that he had in the last chapter of the story ever to be written reintroduced "the Vines," a fine open space immediately in front of Restoration House.' [29]

With people he worked sometimes in much the same fashion. When C. E. Lester visited him in 1840 and asked him if his characters were fancies, he is said to have replied: 'No, sir, they are not; they are copies. You will not understand me to say, of course, that they are true histories in all respects, but they are real likenesses. . . .' [30] Thus Mr. Fang, the insolent magistrate of 'Oliver Twist,' is the notorious Laing, of Hatton Garden, and Dickens studied him deliberately with the idea of putting him into a book.[31] Again, Stryver, in 'A Tale of Two Cities,' was a portrait of Edwin James, Q.C., whom Dickens had seen only once.[32] Many other examples will be found in Mr. Pugh's book, 'The Dickens Originals.'

But the classical example here is the portrait of Leigh Hunt, presented as Harold Skimpole in 'Bleak House.' Of the question of courtesy — or even of ethics — involved, I shall have something to say in another connection. Here it must suffice to adduce the fact. 'I suppose,' wrote Dickens, 'he is the most exact portrait that was ever painted in words! I have very seldom, if ever, done such a thing. But

the likeness is astonishing. I don't think it could possibly be more like himself. It is so awfully true that I make a bargain with myself "never to do so any more." There is not an atom of exaggeration or suppression. It is an absolute reproduction of a real man. Of course I have been very careful to keep the outward figure away from the fact; but in all else it is the life itself.' [33]

One can still sense the ecstasy, the enthusiasm of power in that passage, and it would hardly seem that the naturalistic ideal could be carried farther, or indeed — if this represented his usual practice — that Dickens could be considered an artist at all. Was Dickens then a naturalist? On this side we have Forster's testimony: 'What I had most indeed to notice in him, at the very outset of his career, was his indifference to any praise of his performances on the merely literary side, compared with the higher recognition of them as bits of actual life, with the meaning and purpose on their part, and the responsibility on his, of realities rather than creatures of fancy.' [34] Misplaced emphasis could hardly go farther than that.

This passage, moreover, does not stand alone. Dickens himself praises a Cruikshank drawing on the score of this same minute faithfulness to fact,[35] and he was moved to wild enthusiasm over Westland Marston's play, 'The Patrician's Daughter,' not on the score of its literary excellence, but because 'its subject had been chosen from the actual life of the time.' [36] It is notable also that, when he finds it necessary to defend himself against his critics, his plea is quite likely to involve a false parallel between art and life. In just this vein is his defense of the notable change in the character of Mr. Pickwick, in the course of the story, on the

fatuous ground that 'in real life the peculiarities and oddities of a man who has anything whimsical about him, generally impress us first, and that it is not until we are better acquainted with him that we usually begin to look below these superficial traits, and to know the better part of him.' [37] Much later, in the preface to 'Bleak House,' he collects precedents from real life for Mr. Krook's death from spontaneous combustion, and in the Postscript to 'Our Mutual Friend,' he defends the rather odd will in the story by referring to actual wills of comparable strangeness.

Toward the end of Dickens's life, as I shall have occasion to point out somewhat more fully in a moment, there were marked indications that his interest in realism was growing. And even in the earlier books there are passages which might not unfairly be termed naturalistic. Such are: the death of Nancy, in 'Oliver Twist,' and the death of Sikes and his dog; in 'Nicholas Nickleby,' the terrible description of the graveyard; [38] in 'Barnaby Rudge,' the ghastly picture of the mob and its orgies; and in 'Bleak House,' Jo's account of Nemo's burial.[39]

But all such things are insignificant, and have always been felt to be so, in the general body of Dickens's work. As is well-known, he was bitterly opposed to the Pre-Raphaelite movement, although later, when C. A. Collins became his son-in-law, he relented somewhat and invited Collins to illustrate 'Edwin Drood.' But when he wrote his bitter paper, 'Old Lamps for New Ones,' [40] all he anticipated from the Pre-Raphaelites was 'that every brick in the house will be a portrait; that the man's boots will be copied with the utmost fidelity from a pair of Bluchers sent up out of Northamptonshire for the purpose; and that the texture of his

hands (including four chilblains, a whitlow, and ten dirty nails) will be a triumph of the painter's art.' For himself, he loved Raphael precisely because of the idealistic qualities in him, for Raphael, as Dickens saw him, was 'fed with a preposterous idea of Beauty — with a ridiculous power of etherealising, and exalting to the very Heaven of Heavens, what was most sublime and lovely in the expression of the human face divine on Earth — with the truly contemptible conceit of finding in poor humanity the fallen likeness of the angels of God, and raising it up again to their pure spiritual condition. This very fantastic whim effected a low revolution in Art, in this wise, that Beauty came to be regarded as one of its indispensable elements. In this very poor delusion, artists have continued until this present nineteenth century, when it was reserved for some bold aspirants to "put it down."' And as he felt about pictures, so, pretty steadily, did he feel about books.

Literature is not life. Of that he showed himself conscious in many connections. The distinction is made, on a low plane, but rather amusingly, in a discussion of the Christmas pantomime: 'Surely nobody supposes that the young mother in the pit who falls into fits of laughter when the baby is boiled or sat upon, would be at all diverted by such an occurrence off the stage. Nor is the decent workman in the gallery, who is transported beyond the ignorant present by the delight with which he sees a stout gentleman pushed out of a two pair of stairs window, to be slandered by the suspicion that he would be in the least entertained by such a spectacle in any street in London, Paris, or New York. It always appears to me that the secret of this enjoyment lies in the temporary superiority to the common hazards and mis-

chances of life; in seeing casualties, attended when they really occur with bodily and mental suffering, tears, and poverty, happen through a very rough sort of poetry without the least harm being done to any one — the pretence of distress in a pantomime being so broadly humourous as to be no pretence at all.' [41]

This is faintly reminiscent of Charles Lamb's famous defense of Restoration comedy, though I think Dickens is much surer of his facts. On another occasion, he discusses the matter rather more seriously: 'It does not seem to me to be enough to say of any description that it is the exact truth. The exact truth must be there; but the merit or art in the narrator, is the manner of stating the truth. As to which in literature, it always seems to me that there is a world to be done. And in these times, when the tendency is to be frightfully literal and catalogue-like — to make the thing, in short, a sort of sum in the reduction that any miserable creature can do in that way — I have an idea (really founded on the love of what I profess), that the very holding of popular literature through a kind of popular dark age, may depend on such fanciful treatment.' [42]

And this passage does seem eminently characteristic. After all, the Skimpole incident is exceptional. Again and again Dickens insisted that what he wanted from life was *suggestion*. Having received that, he set to work to develop it in his own way. He wanted reality — yes, but the uncommon aspects of reality. He wanted familiar things — yes, but it was 'the romantic side of familiar things' that attracted him. He had little historic sense, and little of that particular kind of imagination which enables a writer to escape into an imaginary world of his own creation. But his

mind was shot through and through with a hunger for romance, and he set out to find it in the only life he knew — the life that was all about him.

Dickens's strong interest in inculcating practical morality was another influence that tended to discourage entire realism. Take the letters written on editorial matters to his sub-editor, W. H. Wills. '"Evil is Wrought," I have touched at the end. It left off with a disagreeable impression of the feeling between the sisters.' [43] 'About "Sunday in Paris" there is no kind of doubt. Take it out. Such a thing as that "Crucifixion," unless it were done in a masterly manner, we have no business to stagger families with.' [44] He writes to contributors in much the same vein: accepting, for example, Sala's 'Key of the Street,' he explains carefully that he is making a few alterations 'so as not to shock young and lady readers.' [45] In his own work, he was similarly cautious. 'Depend upon it,' he writes Mrs. Hall, concerning 'Nicholas Nickleby,' 'that the rascalities of those Yorkshire schoolmasters *cannot* easily be exaggerated, and that I have kept down the strong truth and thrown as much comicality over it as I could, rather than disgust and weary the reader with its fouler aspects.' [46] Nor was he above altering the plan in his own novels for fear that he might offend somebody: thus in 'Dombey and Son' he gave up his original intention of making, in Walter Gay, a study of the deterioration of character in an amiable young man. 'What do you think?' he asks Forster. 'Do you think it may be done, without making people angry?' [47] The modern novelist would find that very close to toadyism indeed.

This, it may be said, was professional. But there is no question whatever of Dickens's entire sincerity in the mat-

ter. He speaks in exactly the same tone when he is judging works for himself alone. Thus he once criticized a play of Percy Fitzgerald's on the following score: 'And the best scene in it (where the husband urges his wife to go away), is so excessively dangerous, and is so very near passing a delicate line, that I think the chances would be very many to one against an audience's acceptance of it. Because, however drolly the situation is presented, the fact is not to be got over that the lady seriously supposes her husband to be in league with another man, to hand her over to that other man: both those men being present with her.' And he adds: 'Put your sister, mentally, in the situation.' [48] Similarly, he objected to Wilkie Collins's dramatization of 'Armadale,' on the ground that the characters were too wicked for anybody to be interested in. . . . 'you could only carry those situations *by the help of interest in some innocent person whom they placed in peril, and that person a young woman.*' [49] And though he defended Charles Reade's 'Griffith Gaunt' as 'the work of a highly accomplished writer and a good man,' he admitted that he found certain situations in it 'extremely coarse and disagreeable,' and said he would not have passed them as editor because 'what was pure to an artist might be impurely suggestive to inferior minds (of which there must necessarily be many among a large mass of readers). . . .' [50]

This last statement is not at all in the tone of much of the criticism of our day. Many would feel that it drags the artist down to the level of his least intelligent readers, and that, if we are never to write as we feel for fear we may shock — or even harm — somebody, there is not going to be much use in writing at all. And, no doubt, there is much to be said in behalf of this argument. Yet there is something on the

other side also. As I shall have occasion to point out later, it was Dickens's intense social consciousness, together with the fact that he so generally shared the moral and spiritual concepts of his readers that gave him a large share of his power. To a perfectly amazing extent, that which was real to them was real to him also. We must remember, too, that in several books Dickens went farther in dealing with evil than many of his contemporaries felt it safe to go. 'Oliver Twist' shocked so many people upon its appearance that Dickens found it necessary to explain, in that rather Shavian preface to the third edition, that he had yet to learn 'that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil. . . . I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the very dregs of life, so long as their speech did not offend the ear, should not serve the purpose of a moral, at least as well as its froth and cream.' Yet note the qualification. So long as their speech did not offend the ear! 'The Hairy Ape' and 'What Price Glory' are based upon a rather different principle — are they not?

Dickens could never have gone as far as 'What Price Glory': he was too good an artist for that. But there were times, especially as he grew older, when he felt that the proprieties in England needlessly constricted the material with which the writer was permitted to deal. Sometimes this would happen when he came in contact with a piece of French art which seemed to him legitimate and effective, and which he yet realized could never be permitted in England. 'That piece you spoke of (the *Médecin des Enfants*) is one of the very best melodramas I have ever read. Situations, admirable. I will send it to you by Landseer. I am very curious indeed to go and see it; and it is an

instance to me of the powerful emotions from which art is shut out in England by the conventionalities.' [51] Occasionally he was tempted to take the bull by the horns himself and deal with material not quite within the bounds of decorum. With Bradley Headstone and John Jasper, sexual passion stalks into the last novels, and though the analysis does not in any way approach minuteness, still the experience is not simply passed over as it was in the case of Little Em'ly in 'Copperfield' days. Among the 'Hints for Books Written and Unwritten' preserved by Forster, there are many subjects which, as even the biographer himself fully realized, would have taken Dickens's feet into pastures where they did not habitually stray.[52] And Mr. Harry B. Smith, who has studied the notebook used by Dickens in his later years, feels strongly that 'Some of the suggestions for plots and themes indicate that if Dickens had lived longer he might have deviated from the Victorian respectability with which he has been reproached.' [53] Most interesting of all in this connection is that amazing story, 'George Silverman's Explanation,' a work not only quite naturalistic and un-Dickensian, but containing more than a hint of what we now know as the 'stream of consciousness' fiction. It amazed Dickens himself quite as much as it amazed everybody else. 'I am glad you see a certain unlikeness to anything in the American story.* Upon myself it has made the strongest impression of reality and originality!! And I feel as if I had read something (by somebody else), which I should never get out of my mind!!!' [54]

All in all, between 'Silverman,' 'Edwin Drood,' and kindred phenomena, Dickens, at the end of his life, would

* It was first published in *The Atlantic Monthly*.

seem to have been on the verge of new developments which might well have made him a significant figure in the new realistic movement. What Chesterton has happily called the fairy world of *Pickwick* had drifted far away from him, and he could hardly have any reasonable hope that he might ever again find a key to that. The sort of fiction with which he had made his name was now becoming increasingly difficult for him to do. The realistic mood of the years following his death might better have fitted his somewhat disillusioned maturity than anything else could have done.

Indeed, had Dickens been born ten or fifteen years later than he was, it is possible that his portion of the fairy world might have remained largely undiscovered. No man whose sense of life was as strong as his, or who so intimately depended on the coöperation of his public, could ever have wrought in a form alien to the dominant current of his day. For these reasons, those of us who care more for romance than we do for realism are glad that Dickens came along just when he did.

IV

Romance or realism as the case may be, there is a vast bulk of work in our libraries that is signed with the name of Dickens, and it goes without saying that the labor of producing it was great. And it is interesting to see how Dickens accepts the labor, receives it, as it were, with open arms, rejoices in the task for its own sake. 'I should never have made my success in life if I had been shy of taking pains, or if I had not bestowed upon the least thing I have ever undertaken exactly the same attention and care that I have bestowed upon the greatest.' [55] He always rejoiced to take

a fling at those 'superior poetic geniuses who scorn to take prose pains,' and whose work is '"thrown off in a few moments of leisure"' for the benefit of posterity.[56] And as for the 'jolter-headedness of the conceited idiots who suppose that volumes are to be tossed off like pancakes, and that any writing can be done without the utmost application, the greatest patience, and the steadiest energy of which the writer is capable' [57] — he was almost savage in his antagonism to them.

He did not exaggerate his own devotion to his work. When he was working on a story, he was not his own man, and he never hesitated to sacrifice any pleasures he might normally have desired and enjoyed to the prosecution of his task.[58] Writing was not easy for Dickens. In spite of his amazing fertility in the use of words, he was meticulous in his choice of the final detail. He revised with exaggerated care, and 'whenever there was an erasure, it was done in thorough fashion, so that what was effaced could not be read.' [59]

In very early days, Dickens seems to have relied to a degree upon what is carelessly called 'inspiration.' [60] But as he grew older, he disciplined himself, both in industry and in economy.[61] Thus he trained himself always to remain at his desk throughout the morning hours, whether he felt like writing or not. When he was asked on one occasion whether the writing impulse always came, he replied, 'No — sometimes I have to coax it: sometimes I do little else than draw figures or make dots on the paper, and plan and dream till perhaps my time is nearly up. But I always sit here, for that certain length of time.' [62] His daughter testifies that many a morning he could not fill one slip. And the testimony of the artist Frith, who saw him at work on 'A Tale of Two

Cities,' agrees with this: 'After what seemed to me a vast deal of trouble . . . muttering to himself, walking about the room, pulling his beard, and making dreadful faces, he still seemed to fail to satisfy himself with his work.' [63] That his rate of production was slow at best may be inferred from the record of one day in 1843 when he continued work on 'Chuzzlewit' until nine o'clock in the evening, and yet succeeded in producing only the equivalent of about eight printed pages. This seemed to him an enormous quantity for one day, and next day we find him writing Forster ecstatically: 'The consequence is that I *could* finish to-day, but am taking it easy, and making myself laugh very much.' [64]

Naturally his difficulties were always greatest at the beginning of a new novel, and — in a lesser degree — at the beginning of a new number.[65] And as the years piled up, the difficulties seemed to increase rather than diminish from year to year. This was partly because he grew consistently more critical, and partly because to him, as to most artists, age brought a certain stiffening of his powers. Take the manuscript of 'Our Mutual Friend,' place it alongside of a page of 'Oliver Twist,' and the contrast is almost painful. Forster testifies that his 'greater pains and elaboration of writing' began to be notable as early as the latter part of 'Chuzzlewit.' [66] 'Dombey' was somewhat difficult to get started, though he could still write of it that 'invention, thank God, seems to be the easiest thing in the world.' [67] But the day was coming when he was to say instead: 'Although I have not been wanting in industry, I have been wanting in invention. . . .' [68] During 'Little Dorrit,' he found it necessary to jot down suggestions and memoranda

to guide him in his writing. While working on 'Our Mutual Friend,' he was oppressed by the fear that his power must be waning.[69] And in the last days, when Dolby asked him how he liked returning to a serial story, he replied at once that he 'missed the pressure of earlier days.' [70] It is possible, of course, that he made the labor greater than it would have needed to be, for he was not a man who knew how to spare himself in anything. His play was more strenuous than another's work, and it is not surprising to find him writing home from Paris, on one occasion when he had tried to make a holiday there: 'In short, I have had no rest in my play; and on Monday I am going to work again.' [71]

V

So the man's self, his personality, his soul, whatever you choose to call it, was all wrapped up in his work. He did not write novels as men make shoes or drive automobiles, to earn a living: his work was himself. Sometimes the world that he had created actually dwarfed the world in which he lived. To Lady Blessington he once described the experience of sitting over a book 'day after day, until I half began . . . to think it the only reality in life, and to mistake all the realities for short-lived shadows.' [72]

Here, too, should be told the remarkable story which Dickens's eldest daughter has recorded concerning one of the rare occasions when she watched him at work. Generally Dickens wrote in seclusion, but once, when Mamie was recovering from an illness, he insisted that she should be placed in his study. I am not sure that the nervous strain was good for her! 'On one of these mornings, I was lying on the sofa endeavoring to keep perfectly quiet, while my

father wrote busily and rapidly at his desk, when he suddenly jumped from his chair and rushed to a mirror which hung near and in which I could see the reflection of some extraordinary facial contortions which he was making. He returned rapidly to his desk, wrote furiously for a few moments, and then went again to the mirror. The facial pantomime was resumed, and then turning toward, but evidently not seeing me, he began talking in a low voice. Ceasing this soon, however, he returned once more to his desk, where he remained silently writing until luncheon time.' [73]

Miss Dickens's own understanding of this extraordinary performance was that her father here actually threw himself into the character he was creating, and this explanation is accepted substantially by Mr. Van Amerongen, who makes much of the incident in his fine study of 'The Actor in Dickens.' What is even more important, it seems to me, is that we see Dickens here creating directly from himself, and using the elements of his own personality as the basis of his art.

In the light of this passage, how illuminating is a statement in a letter of Dickens's to Forster, written while he was working on 'Barnaby Rudge': 'I have just burnt into Newgate, and am going in the next number to tear the prisoners out by the hair of their heads.' [74] Again, there is the otherwise slightly puzzling statement in the preface to 'A Tale of Two Cities,' that when Dickens first conceived the story, he immediately became anxious 'to embody it in my own person.' 'Throughout its execution, it has had complete possession of me; I have so far verified what is done and suffered in those pages, as that I have certainly done and

suffered it all myself.' [75] It was this, as it were, experiential quality in Dickens that Katherine Mansfield sensed, and that she chose as the distinguishing quality that marked his novels as different from those of her contemporaries. 'There are moments when Dickens is possessed by this power of writing: he is carried away. That is bliss. It certainly is not shared by writers to-day. The death of Cheedle: dawn falling upon the edge of night. One realises exactly the mood of the writer and how he wrote, as it were, for himself, but it was not his will. He *was* the falling dawn, and he *was* the physician going to Bar.' [76]

This being the case, it was inevitable that there should be a sense of reality in his books, for himself as well as for others. He reacted to them as he wrote them, chuckled over their humor,[77] and shivered over their horror.[78] When he gave readings from them in public, he was even more carried away. Even Jane Panton, who hated his pathos and him, said that, on these occasions, 'Dickens himself could hardly bear up under the weight of the woe he was creating.' [79] And George Dolby, who managed his tour in America, remarked that 'He had a singular habit . . . of regarding his books as the productions of some one else, and would almost refer to them as such.' [80]

It was his characters — always his primary interest — that made the strongest impression of reality upon him. Mr. Pickwick, reappearing in 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' is made to speak of what he has done since he 'retired into private life'! [81] All through Dickens's letters are references to and quotations from his characters. Perhaps Mrs. Gamp and Pecksniff are the ones most frequently referred to, but many others enter, including such minor characters as

Mrs. Cluppins, Mrs. Pipchin, and Mrs. Sparsit. 'Family topics remind me of Mr. Kenwigs,' he writes on one occasion.[82] Pickwick is often 'my dear friend Pickwick,' and Mrs. Gamp is 'my dear friend, Mrs. Gamp.' 'If you have any compromise to offer,' he writes jocosely, 'my solicitors are Dodson and Fogg.'[83] A postscript to one letter reads: 'Mr. F's aunt sends her defiant respects.'[84] Quilp's leg is cited as the antithesis of Taglioni's. A Newfoundland puppy is christened Bumble because of his evident consciousness of his own importance. And — most amusing of all — there is the heading on a Tavistock House playbill: 'Lessee and Manager —— Mr. Crummles.'[85]

Among the characters quoted by Dickens, generally in his letters, are Mr. Weller Senior, Miss Tox, the Boots of the Holly Tree Inn, Wemmick, Mr. Sleary, and Boythorn. 'I suppose —— to be, as Mr. Samuel Weller expresses it somewhere in "Pickwick," "ravin' mad with the consciousness o' willany."'[86] A few examples from the letters to Wills are also worth giving: 'What Mr. Micawber calls "the unconscious stranger" has so put me out, that I can't leave here before Friday, clearly.'[87] 'I suppose (like Mr. Micawber) that something will turn up.'[88] 'Many Happy New Years! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, &c. ——'[89] In one delightful letter, he dramatizes himself as Scrooge while Wills is Bob Cratchit: 'Scrooge is delighted to find that Bob Cratchit is enjoying his holiday in such a delightful situation; and he says (with that warmth of nature which has distinguished him ever since his conversion) "Make the most of it, Bob; make the most of it!"'[90]

At the beginning of his career, before he had been able at all to adjust himself to the wonder of his imaginary world,

Dickens seems to have been obsessed by his characters: they haunted him night and day. Later he made an effort to train himself not to think of the book he was writing during the time he was away from his desk. It seems clear, however, that he did continue to think about the books he had already written. Thus James T. Fields has recorded: 'Sometimes he would pull my arm while we were walking together and whisper, "Let us avoid Mr. Pumblechook, who is crossing the street to meet us"; or, "Mr. Micawber is coming; let us turn down this alley and get out of his way."' Once, when Fields asked him whether he ever dreamed of his characters, he replied emphatically: 'It would be like a man's dreaming of himself, which is clearly an impossibility. Things exterior to one's self must always be the basis of dreams.' [91] It is an illuminating reply — is it not?

But Dickens did more than feel the reality of his characters: he loved them. They were a precious bond of union between himself and his readers, altogether 'as if they had been real persons, whose fortunes we had pursued together in inseparable connexion, and that I had never known them apart from you.' [92] To finish a book was agony to him: he felt as if he were 'dismissing some portion of himself into this shadowy world.' [93] The death of Little Nell, at the close of 'The Old Curiosity Shop,' was a source of the keenest suffering, and he struggled over it for weeks, postponing it time and again, until at last he could postpone it no longer.[94] Later in his career, he was hardly less concerned over Paul Dombey, wandering restlessly one whole winter night through the streets of Paris, after he had written the chapter in which Paul's little life is brought to an end.[95]

And it was not only his pathetic children that took hold

of him in this way. Sometimes the whole situation absorbed him, as in the case of 'A Christmas Carol,' over which, in his own words, 'Charles Dickens wept and laughed and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed.' [96] And while he was writing 'The Chimes,' in Genoa in 1844, he became so determined to strike a sledgehammer blow for the poor that he grew almost savage: 'This book . . . has made my face white in a foreign land. My cheeks, which were beginning to fill out, have sunk again; my eyes have grown immensely large; my hair is very lank; and the head inside the hair is hot and giddy. Read the scene at the end of the third part, twice. I wouldn't write it twice for something. . . . Since I conceived, at the beginning of the second part, what must happen in the third, I have undergone as much sorrow and agitation as if the thing were real; and have wakened up with it at night. I was obliged to lock myself in when I finished it yesterday, for my face was swollen for the time to twice its proper size, and was hugely ridiculous.' [97]

VI

Obviously such absorption, such burning interest on Dickens's part in his own work implied considerable faith in its value. He did not often detach himself from it sufficiently to stand off and pass a critical judgment upon it, but it is significant that when he does, we find few or no expressions of dissatisfaction. As his other self, David Copperfield declares when his book is published: 'I was not stunned by the praise which sounded in my ears, notwithstanding

that I was keenly alive to it, and thought better of my own performance, I have little doubt, than anybody else did.'[98] When C. E. Lester visited him in 1840, Dickens is supposed to have said: 'I am trying to enjoy my fame while it lasts, for I believe I am not so foolish as to suppose that my books will be read by any but the men of my own times.' To this modest statement, Lester replied that it would be hard to convince the world of that, whereupon Dickens smiled and said, 'I shall probably not make any very serious efforts to do it.'[99] He did not make such efforts. Indeed, in one preface he half-unconsciously classifies himself with those writers who respect themselves, and who are held in respect by posterity.[100] And in 1846, he writes amusingly to Forster from Lausanne, describing a certain Lord Vernon whom he had met there: 'He knows my books very well, and seems interested in everything concerning them; being indeed accomplished in books generally, and attached to many elegant tastes.'[101]

Dickens is often accused of having been spoiled by his success. Well, he had the independence of the artist and the artist's pride in his work even before he had made any success, and long before he could have ever had any wild visions of the spectacular figure he was to become. When Chapman and Hall first propounded to him Robert Seymour's idea for what ultimately became 'The Pickwick Papers,' he did not hesitate, unknown as he was, fundamentally to alter the plan submitted so as to bring it more definitely within the scope of his talents and interests.[102] As he went on, and became more and more successful, this sense of the importance of his art naturally tended to increase rather than to diminish. He believed always in the impor-

tance of literature and of writers. When Walter Savage Landor dedicated a book to him, he wrote sincerely: 'Believe me, I receive the dedication like a great dignity, the worth of which I hope I thoroughly know. The Queen could give me none in exchange that I wouldn't laughingly snap my fingers at.' [103]

In the first flush of 'Pickwick's' great success, it must be admitted, Dickens did vaunt himself for a time in somewhat unseemly fashion, as the numerous addresses and prefaces attached to that work now remain to testify. Take this from Part X: 'He [that is, the writer] has every temptation to exceed the limits he first assigned to himself, that brilliant success, an enormous and increasing sale, the kindest notice, and the most extensive popularity could hold out.' Part XV contained this superior

'*Notice to Correspondents.* — We receive every month an immense number of communications purporting to be "suggestions" for *Pickwick Papers.* We have no doubt that they are furnished with the kindest intentions; but as it is wholly out of our power to make use of any such hints, and as we really have no time to peruse anonymous letters, we hope the writers will henceforth spare themselves a great deal of unnecessary and useless trouble.'

Finally, in the preface to the first edition, he actually classifies himself with the great writers: 'And if it be objected to the *Pickwick Papers* that they are a mere series of adventures, in which the scenes are ever changing, and the characters come and go like the men and women we encounter in the real world, he [the author] can only content himself with the reflection, that they claim to be nothing else, and that the same objection has been made to the

works of some of the greatest novelists in the English language.'

To be sure, many writers think such things without saying them, and if Dickens did consider himself a great writer, then we of to-day — now that he has been dead as many years as he lived — can hardly gainsay that he was a good critic. Yet, as he grew older, there was nothing quite so crude as those 'Pickwick' prefaces, and sometimes his modesty surprises you, as, for example, when he told Frank Finlay that he never wrote about Irishmen because he had never been able to convince himself that he understood the Irish character.[104] Indeed, Percy Fitzgerald says that Dickens was somewhat ashamed of 'Pickwick' itself in later years, and that, when it was suggested to him that the first edition might some day come to have a collector's value, he treated the idea with incredulous scorn. [105] Fortunately, he cared more for some of the later works, and when he was pleased, he never attempted to conceal it.[106]

And then, after the work was done, there were the critics. In general it may be said that Dickens was extremely sensitive to criticism, and that he avoided it whenever he could. The usual view is that such a course on the part of any artist is cowardly, and the usual view, here as nearly always when conventional people attempt to pass judgments upon artists, is nonsense. A great writer simply cannot afford, if he have at all a sensitive nature, to dissipate his life's energy in reading extensive criticisms of his work. There are only twenty-four hours in the day, and he has larger fish to fry. If there were any reasonable chance that the criticisms might be helpful, might improve the quality of his work in the future, the question would, indeed, completely change its aspect.

But the fact is that the vast bulk of criticism is absolutely useless to a really great and original writer, like Dickens — equally useless whether it praise or whether it blame — for the simple reason that the average critic never really understands what it is that such a writer is trying to do. As Wordsworth pointed out, every great writer must create the taste by which he is enjoyed. When the rare critic does come along, the critic who himself is an artist in his soul, and whose work is based on an understanding of the artist and on love of art, the chances are nine out of ten that the artist will open his heart, no matter who he is, or no matter from what source the article in question may emanate. Only, when you are a world figure as Dickens was, when everybody is writing about you, it is hardly worth while to wade through the tons of chaff to find the few grains of wheat. Still it must be confessed, as slightly indicative of weakness, that, when Dickens did inadvertently come across a bad piece of criticism, he was more annoyed and more put out by it than any confident, conscientious artist has a right to be. And this he himself fully realized. 'I was ludicrously foiled here the other night in a resolution I have kept for twenty years not to know of any attack upon myself, by stumbling, before I could pick myself up, on a short extract in the *Globe* from *Blackwood's Magazine*, informing me that "Little Dorrit" is "Twaddle." I was sufficiently put out by it to be angry with myself for being such a fool, and then pleased with myself for having so long been constant to a good resolution.' [107]

What he particularly resented were charges of inaccuracy, exaggeration, and carelessness. He knew that his work was compounded with infinite pains, and it irritated him terribly

to find that sometimes others were quite unaware that any pains had gone into it. Even to his friend Bulwer-Lytton, who had suggested the possibility of some exaggeration in one of his books, he wrote: 'I cannot tell you how highly I prize your letter, or with what pride and pleasure it inspires me. Nor do I for a moment question its criticism (if objection so generous and easy may be called by that hard name) otherwise than on this ground — that I work slowly and with great care, and never give way to my invention recklessly, but constantly restrain it; and that I think it is my infirmity to fancy or perceive relations in things that are not apparent generally.' [108] And Percy Fitzgerald tells an amusing story about what happened once at Gadshill when Charles Kent ventured to call Dickens's attention to an amusing inconsistency in 'Pickwick.' 'Boz denied it boldly. The book was fetched, when he, in a grotesque state of indignation, appeared to be about to hurl it at his friend's head.' [109]

His prefaces contain abundant evidence of this same sort of sensitiveness. Thus there is his impassioned defense of the accuracy of his portrayal of Nancy in 'Oliver Twist': 'From the first introduction of that poor wretch, to her laying her bloody head upon the robber's breast, there is not one word exaggerated or overwrought.' [110] In the 'Chuzzlewit' prefaces, he repels the charges of caricature on the ground that they simply express the natural irritation of those types that he is criticizing. 'Mr. Dombey undergoes no violent change, either in the book, or in real life.' [111] His defense of Krook's death by spontaneous combustion was so patently absurd that not even his son could pretend to defend it when he came to write the prefaces for the Macmillan edition. He

was very angry, too, about the criticisms of the Circumlocution Office in 'Little Dorrit,' and in a speech delivered the very year of his death, he referred caustically to 'a certain extravagant fiction, but one which I do see rather frequently quoted as if there were grains of truth at the bottom of it. . . .' [112] It was in defense of 'Little Dorrit' also that the famous attack on the 'Edinburgh Review' was called forth.

None of this means that Dickens was not amenable to suggestions. He made at least three outstanding changes in his novels upon the instigation of friends, one of them good, one doubtful, and the other unquestionably bad. The first concerns 'The Old Curiosity Shop,' in which it was John Forster's sense of the fitness of things that was responsible for the death of Little Nell. In 'Dombey and Son,' it was originally planned that, when Edith went away with Carker, relations between them should be just what they appeared to be. But when Lord Jeffrey refused to believe that Edith was really Carker's mistress, Dickens sensed here the objection of a moral public, and changed his plan.[113] Finally, the original close of 'Great Expectations' involved no marriage between Pip and Estella. This change was made, at the suggestion of Bulwer-Lytton, after the story was actually in type. 'I have put in a very pretty piece of writing, and I have no doubt the story will be more acceptable through the alteration.' [114] In both these last cases, Dickens seems deliberately to be adjusting himself to his public. During the last years of his life, furthermore, he was considerably influenced in his plot structure by Wilkie Collins.

VII

In an earlier section, I spoke of the widely existing misapprehension that Dickens was a rather careless, or even an unconscious artist, and emphasized what seemed to me to be the considerations on the other side. It would, however, be grossly misleading to leave the impression that artistic considerations were the beginning and the end of Dickens's concern as a novelist. He himself was always conscious of the 'peculiar relations (personally affectionate and like no other man's) which subsist between me and the public,' [115] and it was precisely in these 'peculiar relations' — social or moral rather than strictly artistic, and personal above all else — that the great secret of Dickens's power lay. No man the sole purpose of whose existence was simply to produce beautiful works of art could ever have taken hold of the heart of humanity as he did it.

The intimate quality of that relationship between reader and author is something of which we in our day can form no adequate conception. The reading public of our time has grown entirely too sophisticated, they receive too many impressions from too many different sources to be as deeply moved by anything as Dickens moved his original readers. Only Bernard Shaw among contemporary writers can be said really to command the front page of the newspapers, and Shaw has castigated us so long and so wholesomely that with most readers the element of personal affection does not enter into the reckoning at all. Perhaps the rapture of generous enthusiasm lingers on in the theater rather more than it does in the world of books. Perhaps here there is to-day a better chance to awaken a direct, immediate response.

Jenny Lind knew very well how to do that in Dickens's own day, and in our time there was more than a flash of it in the wild mingled enthusiasm and sorrow which attended Miss Geraldine Farrar's farewell performances with the Metropolitan Opera Company in 1922, perhaps even more of it in the rapture with which she was acclaimed all through the East, upon her triumphant reappearance as a Lieder singer in the fall of 1927. Yet even these triumphs, in their intensity and their universality, pale before the triumph of Dickens. The English-speaking world actually sobbed in unison over Paul Dombey and Little Nell, and it rocked with mirth over Pickwick and Mrs. Gamp. Here, of course, the serial mode of publication was a tremendous advantage, whatever may be said of it from a strictly artistic point of view. Unquestionably one reason why the drama ordinarily awakens more intense emotion than the novel is that the theater brings a vast concourse of people together and proceeds to play on the emotions of all of them together. Serial publication did not achieve exactly that, to be sure, but it did the next best thing when it brought a whole race to reading the same thing at the same time.

The thought of that vast audience out there, waiting from month to month to lap up whatever milk he might provide, longing from day to day for the appearance of the next fascinating number — it must have influenced Dickens in many ways. They could make their approval or disapproval felt from one month to the next in the sales reports, but that was only the crudest, most obvious manifestation of an influence which must have made itself felt also in many much more subtle ways. I suppose all books are born between the author and his public — all, that is, except those that are

still-born; but there have been very few writers who were in such close touch with their public as Dickens was. Without the thought of their nearness, he could not write at all. When he was at Lausanne, he complained bitterly of 'the absence of streets and numbers of figures. I can't express how much I want these. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place . . . and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil of writing, day after day, without that magic lantern, is IMMENSE!!' [116] And again I think of the actor, and Miss Farrar's saying comes to mind: 'Very frequently there are singers who give most excellent interpretations, who are highly praised, and whom nobody goes to see. Now in the last analysis there are two things which I do. I try to be true to myself and to my own conception of the dramatic fitness of things on the stage, and I try to please my audiences.' Dickens would have understood that, and he would never have felt that through pleasing audiences the spirit of art could be in any way degraded. 'And don't think that it is necessary to write *down* to any part of our audience. I always hold that to be as great a mistake as can be made.' [117] Well, Dickens was essentially an actor in his soul. Actors always seemed to him incomparably the most attractive and interesting people on earth, and it is only as he is compared with them that many phases of his art and his personality can be understood.

As for the nature of the peculiar, personal relation, almost every phase of his career illustrates it. In all sincerity, he wrote once, in reply to an admiring letter: 'To be numbered among the household gods of one's distant countrymen, and

associated with their homes and quiet pleasures; to be told that in each nook and corner of the world's great mass there lives one well-wisher who holds communion with one in the spirit, is a worthy fame, indeed, and one which I would not barter for a mine of wealth.' [118] When he parted from his readers after winding up 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' there was a note of almost personal sorrow in his leave-taking: 'We part until next November. It is a long parting between us, but if I have left you anything by which to remember me, in the meanwhile, with no unkind or distant feelings — anything by which I may be associated in spirit with your firesides, homes, and blameless pleasures — I am happy.' [119] Perhaps this phase of his aspiration is best exemplified in the series of Christmas books, ever since so intimately bound up with family joys that one can hardly think of Christmas at all without thinking of them also.

This sense of contact with his public was greatly enhanced by two things — first, by his editorial work on 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round,' and then, by his readings. The whole of the address printed in the first number of 'Household Words' is worthy of quotation here, though only a paragraph of it can be given:

'We aspire to live in the Household affections, and to be numbered among the Household thoughts, of our readers. We hope to be the comrade and friend of many thousands of people, of both sexes, and of all ages and conditions, on whose faces we may never look. We seek to bring into innumerable homes, from the stirring world around us, the knowledge of many social wonders, good and evil, that are not calculated to render any of us less ardently persevering in ourselves, less tolerant of one another, less faithful in the

progress of mankind, less thankful for the privilege of living in the summer-dawn of time.'

There can be no doubt that 'Household Words' was conducted with this idea definitely in mind. In 1853, we find him writing to Wills, advising the rejection of a paper dealing with the subject of hereditary insanity, 'not with an eye to the feelings of the public in general, but with a consideration for those numerous families in which there is such a taint.' [120] Again I can fairly hear the shriek of the modern realist, and again I confess it sounds to me a little silly. Dickens did not say that such subjects should never be discussed: he simply felt that a family paper was not the place to discuss them.

And then he went on the stage — for that was what he made the reading platform when he appeared on it. It has been lamented now often enough, and we have been told for nearly sixty years that it was this that cost his life. But how could it have been avoided? Charles Dickens was stage-struck all his life. Now at the end, he found a stimulus, a joy in his triumph here that not even his world-wide audience of readers had been able to give him. Who can begrudge him those few years of rapture?

Rapture may seem a strange word for it, for he was a sick man at the time, and the story of his sufferings in America is pitiful enough. It would be easy to go through Dickens's letters and collect passages which would seem abundantly to prove that he hated it all and looked forward longingly to the end. Sometimes, no doubt, he persuaded himself that he did. It was only the money he wanted — after he had that, he could go back to that lovely Gadshill and Miss Hogarth and his children — and writing. But no one who knows his Dickens will be taken in for a moment by that.

Fundamentally Dickens gave readings because he wanted to, and in his clearer moments he realized it fully. 'I am perpetually counting the weeks before me to be "read" through, and am perpetually longing for the end of them; and yet I sometimes wonder whether I shall miss something when they are over.' [121] The old, familiar stories took on new meanings as he read them to others: 'so real are my fictions to myself that, after hundreds of nights, I come with a feeling of perfect freshness to that little red table, and laugh and cry with my hearers, as if I had never stood there before.' [122]

Sometimes, to be sure, the admiration and the adulation were wearying, or even annoying. He could stand a good deal, however — for he loved adulation — as we all do — and his habit of regarding humanity somewhat tenderly, even when it was absurd — not cynically or with a feeling of superiority, as the average intellectual of to-day has trained himself to regard it — must have helped him through many uncomfortable moments. Occasionally, to be sure, the electric current of sympathy between the actor and the audience would be severed, and then he was miserable and helpless.[123] But when he had an audience like the one at Glasgow —! 'And at the end of Dombey yesterday afternoon, in the cold light of day, they all got up, after a short pause, gentle and simple, and thundered and waved their hats with such astonishing heartiness and fondness, that, for the first time in all my public career, they took me completely off my legs, and I saw the whole eighteen hundred of them reel to one side as if a shock from without had shaken the hall.' [124] And sometimes the testimony was still more direct — went far beyond adulation and all such vulgarity.

Such was the case at Belfast, where a man grasped his hand and begged that he would 'do me the honour to shake hands Misther Dickens and God bless you sir; not ounly for the light you've been to me this night, but for the light you've been in mee house sir (and God love your face!) this many a year!' [125] — and again in York, 'when a lady whose face I had never seen stopped me . . . in the street, and said to me, *Mr. Dickens, will you let me touch the hand that has filled my house with many friends?*' [126] Most touching of all, perhaps, is the story Moncure D. Conway tells of how one night after a banquet, 'an aged and poor woman rushed from the pavement, caught his hand between both of hers, and looked with her withered face bent upon his. Dickens stood still, his face flushing, and returned her look with a sad smile. No word was spoken by either.' [127]

Ah! Life does not hold much more than that.

VIII

Glory came to him as it has come to few of the sons of men. You may sniff at his triumph if you like, but it was the greatest triumph of its kind that the world has ever known. And even to-day, his fame, his influence, his hold are tremendous. Superior critics have disposed of him effectually again and again, yet he goes on.

Certainly he earned what he got, for he paid for it with his life. And here one is tempted to ask, as in so many other cases: Why did he do it? and, Was it worth while? He himself felt keenly the dangers and discouragements of the literary career, and if he did not go so far as Voltaire, who said that if he had a son who contemplated the profession of letters, he would wring his neck out of sheer tenderness,

still he solemnly warned young writers on more than one occasion. 'The Katie part is particularly well done. If I don't say more, it is because I have a heavy sense, in all cases, of the responsibility of encouraging any one to enter on that thorny track, where the prizes are so few and the blanks so many. . . .' [128]

If the prizes are few, then he would seem, all the more, to have carried off a fair share of them. Yet this alone, he insists, would not be enough. 'Nothing but the interest of the subject, and the pleasure of striving with the difficulty of the form of treatment — nothing in the way of money, I mean — could else repay the time and trouble. . . .' [129] But there were many compensations. There was, first of all, the work itself, the pleasure of doing it well. 'As to the planning out from week to week, nobody can imagine what the difficulty is, without trying. But, as in all such cases, when it is overcome the pleasure is proportionate.' [130] There was the blessed consciousness of power. 'If you had seen Macready last night, undisguisedly sobbing and crying on the sofa as I read, you would have felt, as I did, what a thing it is to have power.' [131] And there was the hope of fame, the wish to be read by posterity. 'May it be as good a book as I hope it will be, for your children's children's sake.' [132]

He would have answered the question in the affirmative. It was worth while. That art alone could make life significant, or even tolerable, he had felt, in some measure, all his days. In the darkest hour of his life, writing was his help and his refuge. 'But may I not be forgiven for thinking it a wonderful testimony to my being made for my art, that when in the midst of this trouble and pain, I sit down to my book, some beneficent power shows it all to me, and tempts me to

be interested, and I don't invent it — really do not — *but see it*, and write it down.'[133] He was willing to pay whatever toll Life might care to exact for the gift she had given him. 'I am always deeply sensible of the wonderful exercise I have of life and its highest sensations, and have said to myself for years, and have honorably and truly felt, this [that is, his domestic maladjustments] is the drawback to such a career, and is not to be complained of.'[134] And if he was not afraid to sacrifice happiness, he did not pause at health either. Always he spent himself with fine prodigality, and there is an admirable courage in the letter to Miss Hogarth in which he reports the finding of Frank Beard, that he was suffering from degeneration of some function of the heart. 'Of course I am not so foolish as to suppose that all my work can have been achieved without *some* penalty. . . .'[135]

So this last question is a foolish one after all. Dickens wrote for money and for fame and to help humanity, of course. But, beyond that and above it, he wrote, as all great writers have written, because there was something inside of him that he had to get out. Just what that urge is and just how it operates has never been quite satisfactorily explained, but it exists in every man who is a genius, and without it there could be no art. It was for this cause that he came into the world.

CHAPTER III

FROM DAY TO DAY

I

We have now concluded our study of Dickens in his professional aspect. In this chapter I propose to make a somewhat different approach, observing him, so far as possible, in some of the normal interests and habits of daily life, and also as he is reflected in the consciousness of those who came, from time to time, into more or less intimate contact with him. It may be well to begin with the purely external matter of his appearance.

There is only one snapshot of him as a child. Mrs. Godfrey, sister of William Giles, Dickens's early schoolmaster, remembered him in after years as a very handsome boy with long curly hair of a light color, and drew a picture of him, sitting 'with his book in his left hand, holding his wrist with his right hand, and constantly moving it up and down, and at the same time sucking his tongue.' [1]

His appearance at the age of sixteen is described in detail by one of his fellow-clerks: 'He was a rather short but stout-built boy, and carried himself very upright — his head well-up — and the idea he gave me was that he must have been drilled by a military instructor. His dress in some measure, perhaps, contributed to that impression. He wore a frock-coat . . . buttoned up, of dark blue cloth, trousers to match, and (as was the fashion of the time) buttoned with leather straps over the boots; black neckerchief, but no shirt collar showing. His complexion was of healthy pink —

almost glowing — rather a round face, fine forehead, beautiful expressive eyes full of animation, a firmly set mouth, a good-sized, rather straight nose, but not at all too large. His hair was a beautiful brown, and worn long, as was then the fashion. His cap was like the undress cap of an officer in the army, of some shining material with a narrow shining leather strap running round the point of the chin. His appearance was altogether decidedly military. . . . He looked very clean and well fed and cared for.' [2]

The following description dates from 'Pickwick' days: 'A slight, trimly-built figure; an oval face eminently handsome; long silken hair, and slight downy whiskers; a swallow tail coat with a very high velvet waistcoat, over which meandered a lengthy gold chain; beneath the crimson vest one and sometimes two underwaistcoats; "Cossack" trousers for morning dress; for evening wear, tightly-fitting black pantaloons with small buttons at the ankles, the pedal extremities being endued with speckled black silk hose and "pumps"; while the high mounting stock was replaced by a white cravat, with a bow about eight inches wide, and a protruding jacket or shirt frill.' [3]

With this it is interesting to compare a portion of Forster's description from the same period: 'He had a capital forehead, a firm nose with full wide nostril, eyes wonderfully beaming with intellect and running over with humour and cheerfulness, and a rather prominent mouth, strongly marked with sensibility. The head was altogether well-formed and symmetrical, and the air and carriage of it were extremely spirited. The hair so scant and grizzled in later years was then of a rich brown and most luxuriant abundance, and the bearded face of his last two decades had

hardly a vestige of hair or whisker; but there was that in the face as I first recollect it which no time could change, and which remained implanted on it unalterably to the last.' [4]

Nevertheless, Dickens did change immensely as he grew older, much more, I think, than most of us do. The beard and mustaches added in later years were partly responsible for the change, but, even disregarding these, one may very readily see, as he turns the pages of Kitton's magnificent 'Charles Dickens by Pen and Pencil,' how the handsome, rather dandified boy of the Maclise and Laurence portraits is fading, year by year, into the weather-beaten, benevolent-looking man of the Ben Gurney photographs. So also James T. Fields, musing reminiscently over his Dickens mementoes, remarked: 'I sometimes think . . . I must have known two individuals bearing the same name, at various periods of my own life.' [5]

Let three more sketches complete these impressions. The first dates from what may be called the intermediate period of his career, and comes from the pen of an unnamed lady who dined with the Dickens family at Tavistock House: 'Mr. Dickens — how clearly he stands before me now, with his frank, encouraging smile, and the light of welcome in his eyes! — was then slight in person, and rather pale than otherwise. The symmetrical form of his head, and the fine, spirited bearing of the whole figure, struck me at once; then the hearty *bonhomie*, the wholesome sweetness of his smile, but, more than anything else, the great beauty of his eyes. They were the eyes of a master, with no consciousness of mastery in them: they were brilliant without hardness, and searching without sharpness.' [6]

Later, Ashby-Sterry gives a vivid picture of him standing

on the pier at Brighton, 'in a thick pea-jacket with the collar turned up, with his hands deep in his pockets, with his bright eyes sparkling, with his cheeks bronzed and ruddy with the salt spray — looking very much as if he were captain of a ship and steering her into some difficult port.' [7] Finally, G. A. Sala speaks of him in later years as 'a bronzed, weather-worn, hardy man, with somewhat of a seaman's air about him. His carriage was remarkably upright, his mien almost aggressive in its confidence.' [8]

By far the most impressive of Dickens's features seems to have been his eyes, and his friends recur often to the statement that none of his pictures give any idea of their extraordinary beauty. 'What portrait can do justice to the frankness, kindness, and power of his eyes?' asks Sir Arthur Helps. 'They seemed to look through you, and yet only to take notice of what was best in you and most worthy of notice.' [9] And Arthur Locker declares, 'I was especially struck with the brilliancy and vivacity of his eyes: there seemed as much life and animation in them as in twenty ordinary pairs of eyes.' [10] In later years he was compelled to invest in a pair of powerful spectacles, but they gave him a distinctly 'old-mannish' look,[11] and he wore them as little as possible.

Next after Dickens's eyes, most observers seem to have been impressed by his clothes. Those were the days when fashion still permitted some rather gorgeous color combinations in masculine attire, but even so, Dickens's glory was often a source of wonder. When Miss Elizabeth Wormely saw him at a ball in Boston in 1842, 'He had brought with him two velvet waistcoats for full dress, one a vivid green, the other a brilliant crimson, these were further ornamented

by a profusion of gold watch chain.' [12] When Laura Hain Friswell met him, 'his bright green waistcoat, vivid scarlet tie, and pale lavender trousers would have been noticed by any one, but the size of the nosegay in his buttonhole riveted my attention, for it was a regular flower garden.' [13] And the artist Frith relates that, as late as 1859, Dickens came to the studio one day to have his portrait painted, 'wearing a large sky-blue overcoat with bright red cuffs.' [14]

Of course he was not always dressed for splendor, but his everyday clothes seem to have been nearly as eccentric as his formal attire. Sala speaks of his walking dress in later years as having 'somewhat of a sporting and somewhat of a theatrical guise,' [15] and an innkeeper at Strood described his costume on his long walks in the country as consisting of 'low shoes not over-well mended, loose large check-patterned trousers that sometimes got entangled in the shoes when walking, a brown coat thrown open, sometimes without waistcoat, a belt instead of braces, a necktie which now and then got round towards his ear, and a large-brimmed felt hat, similar to an American's, set well at the back of his head. In his hand he carried by the middle an umbrella, which he was in the habit of constantly swinging, and if he had dogs (a not unfrequent occurrence) he had a small whip as well. He walked in the middle of the road at a rapid pace, upright, but with his eyes cast down as if in deep thought.' [16]

Dickens's physiognomy did not make an equally favorable impression on all observers, and it should go without saying that his clothes did not. Perhaps the most unpleasant pen-picture we have of him is that of Richard Henry Dana, Jr.: 'He is of middle height (under if anything) with a large expressive eye, a regular nose, matted, curling, wet-looking

black hair, a dissipated looking mouth with a vulgar draw to it, a muddy, olive complexion, stubby fingers, and a hand by no means patrician. A hearty off hand manner, far from well bred and a rapid dashing way of talking. He looks wide awake, "up to everything," full of cleverness, with quick feelings and great ardor. You admire him and there is a fascination about him which keeps your eye on him, yet you cannot get over the impression that he is a low bred man.' [17]

Not far behind Dana is Eleanor Christian: 'He wore his hair long, in "admired disorder," and it suited the picturesque style of his head; but he had on a surtout with a very wide collar, very much thrown back, showing a vast expanse of waistcoat, drab trousers and drab boots with patent leather toes, and the whole effect (apart from his fine head) gave evidence of a *loud* taste in costume, and was not proper for evening dress. He did not speak much, and his utterance was low-toned and rapid, with a certain thickness, as if the tongue were too large for the mouth. I found afterwards that this was a family characteristic; and he had a habit of sucking his tongue when thinking, and at the same time running his fingers through his hair till it stood out in most leonine fashion.' [18]

Still others were distinctly disappointed when first coming in contact with him. T. A. Trollope's first impression was of 'a dandified, pretty-boy-looking sort of figure, with a slight flavor of the whipper-snapper genius of humanity.' [19] George Eliot, who ultimately came to value him highly, could at first find no benevolence in his face, and thought him 'not distinguished-looking in any way — neither handsome nor ugly, neither fat nor thin, neither tall nor short.' [20] The Reverend John Tulloch said of his appearance on the

reading platform: 'It is a sort of mixture of the *waiter* and the actor, Frenchified in his dress to a degree quite disagreeable. He had not a pleasant face, singular lines — I don't know whether of care — running under his eyes and from his mouth — in short, not very gentlemanly.' [21] In his later years, thought Thomas Woolner, the 'hard lines and wrinkles' of his face gave it rather a sarcastic look.

Indeed, some observers emphasized these things to such an extent that many, meeting him for the first time, expected to view a phenomenon, and in such cases they were nearly always disappointed. Thus Mrs. Charles Eliot Norton, visiting him in 1868: 'I looked for the "tricks and the manners" of which I had so often heard, but my time was quite thrown away.' [22] Similarly, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, when he heard him read on his second American tour: 'There is nothing flashy or vulgar about him, which I feared.' [23]

II

Before going on to observe Dickens in his various activities, we must pause for a moment to look at that which is necessarily the foundation of all activities — health. On first consideration, it might seem that his health was unusually good. Often he exults in it: 'Went down to the Gallery of Illustration (we acted that night), did the day's business, corrected the proofs in Polar costume in dressing room, broke up two numbers of "Household Words" to get it out directly, played in "Frozen Deep" and "Uncle John," presided at supper of company, made no end of speeches, went home and gave in completely for four hours, then got sound asleep, and next day was as fresh as you used to be in the far-off days of your lusty youth.' [24] He is likely to refer to

even minor illnesses with the note that they are exceptional: in 1867 he says he has not had a headache in twenty years.[25] Even at the end he possessed an unusual rallying-power after illness: the sea voyage home from America in 1868 did him so much good that when he arrived in England he literally amazed his physician.[26]

Yet Forster tells us that 'His habits were robust, but not his health,'[27] and, as we run over the record of his life, we find that, without being in any sense a sick man, he had his share of the ills that mortal flesh is heir to. To be sure, that good Dickensian, Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers (of blessed memory), once reminded us that in reading the medical record in Frederick Chamberlin's 'The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth,' we ought to remember 'that all these ailments did not come at once, but were scattered over a period of sixty-nine years.' The caution is worth keeping in mind here. Dickens himself speaks of 'my eyes, which are none of the best,'[28] and Percy Fitzgerald draws a picture for us of 'the strained eyes, peering through the gold-rimmed glasses, always of strong power.'[29] As early as his blacking-warehouse days, he suffered from some sort of malady in his right side,[30] and this troubled him intermittently to the end of his life, sometimes causing him exquisite pain.[31] Just before the first visit to America, he was forced to submit to a painful operation.[32] At one time he suffered so much from insomnia that he often preferred to tramp the streets all night rather than stay at home and fight out the battle for rest.[33]

In 1865, ill health definitely claimed Dickens as her own, and from then until the end five years later he was a broken man. The puzzling and distressing lameness in the left foot

now began to trouble him, and not long afterward he received first warnings from the apoplexy that finally killed him. In 1866, he was told that he had heart trouble. During the American reading tour he must have been often at the point of death: indeed, I have often thought that but for the tender care of James and Annie Fields he might well have died on this side of the water. Mrs. Fields's diary gives one appalling picture of the strain under which he fought his way on: 'Excitement and exercise of reading will make the blood rush into his hands until they become at times almost black, and his face and head (especially since he has become so fatigued) will turn from red to white and back to red again without his being conscious of it.' [34] And what his condition was like during the final readings in England may be inferred from the direction his physician gave to Charles Dickens the younger: 'I have had some steps put up against the side of the platform, Charley. You must be there every night, and if you see your father falter in the least, you must run up and catch him and bring him off with me, or, by Heaven, he'll die before them all.' [35] Yet, when the end came, many were surprised. 'It was but a week or two since,' wrote Anthony Trollope, 'that I was discussing at the Club that vexed question of international copyright with Mr. Dickens, and while differing from him somewhat, was wondering at the youthful vitality of the man who seemed to have done his forty years of work without having a trace of it left upon him to lessen his energy, or rob his feelings of their freshness.' [36]

For the psychographer, the interesting thing about all this is the attitude Dickens himself takes toward it. In a word, he tried to ride his illness, to master it, to force it

down, just as he forced his temperament. To be sure, he talked freely of his afflictions, for he always talked freely of everything. But he did not exactly encourage others who sought to talk about them. 'If there was one thing more than another that my father resented,' wrote Charles Dickens the younger, 'it was any suggestion from anybody else that his health was failing, or that he was undertaking anything beyond his strength.' [37] And Edmund Yates says that his dislike to any public reference to the state of his health amounted almost to a mania.[38] I am sure that one reason why he insisted on doing that terrible reading of the murder of Nancy, in spite of the fact that it was so cruelly hard for him, was — precisely because it was hard for him. Every time he got through it, he felt that he had won a triumph: he had vindicated his strength once more. When he was told that the trouble in his foot might be gout, he replied: 'I make out so many reasons against supposing it to be gouty that I really do not think it is.' [39] You see? It must not be. It shall not be. Charles Dickens will not have it!

Dickens was much too sane a man ever to deny the reality of suffering or to commit himself to any theory of mental healing, yet again and again we see his mind forcing the body to do all the unreasonable things he expected of it. Thus we are told that he continually exercised his near-sighted vision by looking determinedly at distant objects.[40] Can you imagine anything worse from a medical standpoint, or anything more beautifully characteristic of him? During the last ten years of his life, he made up his mind to overcome his tendency to seasickness, and we have his son's word for it that he succeeded perfectly.[41] Even at the

end, his heart was strong. In this respect he was like another actor, the late Robert B. Mantell, whose stalwart, unconquerable courage is fresh in the memory of us all: he scorned pity and forced himself on to artistic achievement long after his physical resources had burned themselves out.

The matter of nerves seems to demand one word more. Dickens was never in any way a moody man. 'I am not easily dispirited . . .' is his own word.[42] This is why he always shone so advantageously on public occasions. 'The first time I took the chair at a public dinner, I felt just as much confidence as if I had done the same thing a hundred times before.'[43] Once, during a performance of 'Not So Bad As We Seem,' one of the actors inadvertently swept a number of properties off the table with his sword. Dickens, playing Lord Wilmot, immediately called out: 'Here, drawer! come and clear away the wreck!' — quite as if the accident had been definitely planned for in the business of the scene.[44] Again, a test of a very different sort. Once in a railway carriage, Dickens heard himself monstrously slandered. He listened quietly for some time and then joined in the conversation, at first merely suggesting modestly that some of the stories might not be true. The greasy-minded one refused to listen, growing steadily more and more abusive, until at last Dickens brought the situation to a head by giving him the lie direct. Hereupon his antagonist called for his card. Then, and not until then, did Dickens quietly present it.[45]

But the most striking instances of his presence of mind come in connection with his readings. In Birmingham, in 1867, an error in placing his gas fixtures caused an escape of gas which caught a heavy wire and threatened any moment

to bring one of the reflectors down into the stalls. Toward the close of the reading, Dolby noticed the danger and became panic-stricken. Finally he succeeded in attracting the attention of Dickens, who altered his reading so as to leave the platform almost immediately, yet apparently without having left anything out. 'Mr. Dickens had seen the danger much sooner than I had, for he told me that he had been watching the heating process from the middle of the Reading, and had calculated in his mind how long the wire would last.' [46] Several years before, at Newcastle, a gas apparatus actually had come down, though without disastrous results: 'There was a terrible wave among the people for an instant, and God knows what destruction of life a rush to the stairs would have caused. Fortunately a lady in the front of the stalls ran out towards me, exactly in a place where I knew the whole hall could see her. So I addressed her, laughing, and half-asked and half-ordered her to sit down again; and, in a moment, it was all over.' [47]

But of course he was not always in such control of himself. 'He had strange fits of depression from time to time,' [48] says Henry Fielding Dickens; and the man himself writes to Charles Lever, bravely but not too cheerfully: 'Your trial has not yet been mine, and I am in my fifty-second year with a sound of cheering behind me, but my heart faints sometimes under such troubles as I do know, and if it were not for a certain stand-up determination, I should lie down. "Who is hit?" Nelson said, without looking round, when they shot his Secretary. "I am hit," ten thousand of us may cry at once instead, "in a mortal place, but our rest is before us, and we will work our way to it."' [49]

Dickens's restlessness we shall have occasion to refer to in

several connections. There was, especially in later years, a good deal of discontent at the bottom of it, but there was a good deal, too, that was simply nerves. He had the habit which nervous, restless people always have of looking forward to the end of every enterprise before it had fairly begun, not at all because he did not enjoy what he was doing, but simply because there was something else he wanted to do afterward. Never at any time could he endure suspense. If there were a question to be settled, he could not wait for the auspicious moment for settlement: he must settle it right away, anyhow, somehow, no matter how it came out, just for the sake of getting the thing off his mind. And sometimes such settlements were much to his cost, as in the case of the early dispute with Macrone over the matter of reissuing the 'Sketches by Boz.'

In addition to all this, Dickens had an imagination, and an imagination has never been known to soothe the nerves of its possessor. He had the bad habit of worrying over inconsequential things: thus, when he was getting ready to act in Montreal in 1842: 'I shall want a flaxen wig and eyebrows; and my nightly rest is broken by visions of there being no such commodities in Canada. I wake in the dead of night in a cold perspiration, surrounded by imaginary barbers, all denying the existence or possibility of obtaining such articles.' [50] The same year he wrote Longfellow from Broadstairs, with reference to an invitation he had given him to London: 'The states of mind I have undergone — and all along of you — since I have been down here, a term of nine weeks! The misgivings I have had of the possibility of your knocking at my door in London without notice, and finding nobody there but an old woman; the misgivings that

have come across me of your being successively on every foreign steamer that has passed the windows homeward bound since the first part of the month; the hideous train of fancies from which your letter relieved me, baffles description.' [51] Sometimes his books got into his dreams, as when, all through one week, he dreamed 'that the "Battle of Life" was a series of chambers impossible to be got to rights or got out of, through which I wandered drearily all night.' [52]

Just as the physical illnesses of 1865 put an end to Dickens's health, so the Staplehurst railroad accident of the same year permanently shattered his nerves. The two are, of course, closely connected. On the tenth of June, 1865, he wrote to Forster: 'I was in the terrific Staplehurst accident yesterday, and worked for hours among the dying and dead. I was in the carriage that did not go over, but went off the line, and hung over the bridge in an inexplicable manner. No words can describe the scene.' [53] Three years later, he wrote to M. de Cerjat, describing the results: 'My escape in the Staplehurst accident of three years ago is not to be obliterated from my nervous system. To this hour I have sudden vague rushes of terror, even when riding in a hansom cab, which are perfectly unreasonable but quite insurmountable. I used to make nothing of driving a pair of horses habitually through the most crowded parts of London. I cannot now drive, with comfort to myself, on the country roads here; and I doubt if I could ride at all in the saddle. My reading secretary and companion knows so well when one of these odd momentary seizures comes upon me in a railway carriage, that he instantly produces a dram of brandy, which rallies the blood to the heart and generally prevails. I forget whether I ever told you that my watch

(a chronometer) has never gone exactly since the accident?'[54] And somewhat more specifically, Miss Dickens tell us that once, when he was riding on the train, 'my father suddenly clutched the arms of the railway carriage seat, while his face grew ashy pale, and great drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and though he tried hard to master the dread, it was so strong that he had to leave the train at the next station.'[55]

With regard to this whole matter of Dickens's health, one cannot help feeling that, if he had only known how to conserve his energies, he might have been a healthier man and lived longer, and again one cannot help feeling that such speculation is fruitless. He was a spender, not a miser, and he could have found no joy in hoarding. Doubtless he would have chosen consciously, as he did unconsciously, to go beneath the Abbey stones when he did, rather than to live on half-heartedly for ten or a dozen coddled years.

III

Dickens's attitude toward humanity is dealt with elsewhere: his social proclivities demand a word here. He was a man who needed to have other men about him. 'Somehow, we never can resist joining a crowd . . .'[56] he writes in the 'Sketches by Boz.' He never could at least. Living alone seemed to him unnatural and unwholesome: I think only Miss La Creevy, among all his recluses, is presented with anything approaching genuine sympathy. When he gave a dinner party, he actually used very narrow tables so that the guests might be brought closer together and talk to each other.

Dickens's social instinct was more than the natural bent of

Office of All the Year Round,
A WEEKLY JOURNAL CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 26. Wellington Street, Strand, London, W.C.

Saturday Tenth June 1865

My Dear Lever

I was in the frightful accident yesterday and worked for hours among the dying and dead.

I was in the carriage that did not go down, but that hung inexplicably suspended in the air over the side of the broken bridge. I am going home to reassure my daughter's mind. Can you come down say tomorrow? Higham on the North Kent Line from Charing X is my station. Write tonight, or telegraph if you can come. We shall be heartily glad to see you. There is a room for you, of course.

My address is —

Gad's Hill Place
Higham

Ever Yours cordially

CD

I can't sign my flourish, being nervously shaken

his disposition: it was a reasoned conviction on his part that no solitary human being could attain salvation alone. Barbox Brothers does not come to himself until he learns the secret of getting on with his fellow-men. 'For he was Barbox Brothers and Co. now, and had taken thousands of partners into the solitary firm.' [57] In 'Barnaby Rudge,' Haredale points out that 'The men who learn endurance, are they who call the whole world brother. I have turned *from* the world, and I pay the penalty.' [58] And in 'A Christmas Carol,' his solitary unsympathetic life is one of the principal things that Marley has to atone for after his death: 'It is required of every man . . . that the spirit within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and travel far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is condemned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through the world — oh, woe is me! — and witness what it cannot share, but might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!' [59]

I do not mean, however, that Dickens was anything like a social lion or a social butterfly. Men of genius seldom are. Instead they are likely to be bored by the stilted inanities of formal social intercourse, and to feel that, when they indulge in them, they are fruitlessly consuming life energies which might well be more profitably employed. In the days of his Parliamentary reporting, Dickens is described as 'exceedingly reserved in his manners, though interchanging the usual courtesies of life with all with whom he came in contact in the discharge of his professional duties.' [60] Later, when he stopped at an inn on one of his walks in the country, 'he rarely spoke to any one but looked round as though taking in everything at a glance.' [61] At the Athenæum Club

also, he seldom spoke to any one unless previously addressed.[62] Lord Redesdale says he was not always sociable, 'for if he thought he was being lionized he would sit mum-chance,' but up to the end he could sparkle like champagne in congenial company.[63] Marcus Stone, who knew him well, considered him always 'one of the shyest and most sensitive of men.' [64] Yet nobody could be a more genial host than Dickens was on many occasions.

Like many artists, Dickens sometimes shocked conventional people by his choice of company. One observer has recorded: 'Dickens was an odd fellow regarding the company he sought. I have known him . . . to go down to the Seven Dials, about the worst place in London, and sleep and eat there. He roasted his herring where the rest did, and slept with the poorest. He loved low society. He never seemed so happy as when seated in a poor coffee-house, with a crowd of the lower classes talking around him. He never missed a word that was said, and was the closest observer I ever saw. Nothing escaped him. When I was working for him, he was at the zenith of his fame — just before his death; and even then he loved these careless, rollicking rounds among the poor better than a high-toned dinner.' [65]

A man in whom the social instinct was as keenly developed as that might surely be expected to show considerable interest in sports and games. In the former, however, Dickens's interest was never very keen. As a child, he was prevented by illness from taking any part in sports whatever, and the real flair cannot be developed later. At one period of his young manhood, he, Forster, and Ainsworth were devoted to horseback riding, but the habit was abandoned early, and Mamie Dickens could not even remember ever having seen

her father on a horse.[66] There is some mention later of cricket, bowling, bar-leaping, and quoits, and at one period he encouraged such recreations in the meadow back of his house.[67] Among water sports, bathing alone had any charm for him.[68] Hunting he disclaims altogether,[69] and he always set his face steadily against horse-racing with all its attendant evils and temptations.[70] Of boxing there is no suggestion whatever.

Dickens's favorite recreation always was walking, and they have never been lacking who declare that he walked himself to death. He had the curious idea that the way to recover from mental strain was to impose upon himself an equal amount of physical strain,[71] and this generally took the form of immensely long hikes, at the incredible pace of four miles an hour. 'My last special feat,' he writes in 'The Uncommercial Traveller,' 'was turning out of bed at two, after a hard day, pedestrian and otherwise, and walking thirty miles into the country to breakfast.' [72] It was by no means a solitary instance. Once, on a hot day, he walked eighteen miles under a blazing sun in four hours and a half, and of course he was ill for it afterwards. And on top of that, to make it all as bad as possible, his mental labor would continue while he walked. His son tells us that, when they were out together, Dickens would sometimes drop into abstraction and remain wholly oblivious of everything for a time: then he would suddenly resume the conversation as if no break had occurred.[73]

Indoor recreations were not neglected. Cards, indeed, he never cared for, and he speaks of them slightingly.[74] Dancing interested him as an expression of good-fellowship, and he insisted on his children learning to dance at a very tender

age, but, says his daughter, 'except at family gatherings in his own or his most intimate friends' homes, I never remember seeing him join in it himself, and I doubt if, even as a young man, he ever went to balls.' [75] Once he himself speaks of dancing all night,[76] but such things must have been very exceptional. He liked pool and billiards, approving a contest of skill because 'it brings out the mettle.' [77] Conjuring was among his entertainment facilities, and Fields says that he was a gifted ventriloquist.

But it was charades and guessing games of various kinds that interested him most, and of course he entered into them as seriously and as whole-heartedly as if a great issue had been at stake in every single one of them. Says Dolby: 'Mr. Dickens prided himself on his skill in guessing a subject fixed upon during his absence from the room. His success in penetrating people's thoughts was so marked that it would by some have been termed spiritualistic.' [78] Charades introduced the theatrical interest, and there was no length to which he would not go in preparing for them. In one he wore 'a lady's broad-brimmed hat, pinned up on one side, and a rather draggled feather stuck nearly on end, which would keep turning round the wrong way.' [79] Once he planned charades on an elaborate scale, entirely forgetting, until another member of the family called his attention to it, that no audience had been provided for.

But Dickens's play instinct did not always express itself in a definitely organized way. In his early life, when he was working for the solicitor Blackmore, it is recorded that he used sometimes to drop cherry stones from the window on to the hats of the passengers in the street below. 'Some, being annoyed by it, came up to the office to complain, and

he always put himself forward to answer them, doing so with so much gravity and with such an air of innocence, that they went away with the impression that they must really have been mistaken.' [80] Miss Dickens tells an interesting story, dating from the days of her parents' courtship. One evening, shortly after dinner at the Hogarth home, 'a young sailor jumped through one of the open windows into the apartment, whistled and danced a horn-pipe, and before they could recover from their amazement jumped out again. A few minutes later my father walked in at the door as sedately as though quite innocent of the prank, and shook hands with everyone; but the sight of their amazed faces proving too much for his attempted sobriety, his hearty laugh was the signal for the rest of the party to join in his merriment.' [81]

Not all Dickens's pranks can be so precisely dated as that, in the record as it is left to us, but at least it is clear that, far from being confined to his youth, they run clear through his life to the end. During the time of the itinerant theatricals, for example, leap-frog was a favorite recreation — 'all round the supper table, very much of the fun consisting of special difficulties and consequent disasters; Dickens, for instance, was fond of giving a "high-back," which, though practicable enough for the more active, was not easily surmounted by others. It, therefore, frequently occurred that the leaping "frog" failed to attain the centre, but slipped off on one side, and once, when a very vigorous run at it failed to carry the individual over, the violent concussion sent the high-arched "frog" flying under the table, followed headlong by the unsuccessful leaper.' [82] Another tells the story of his running up to a friend's drawing-room one night after

dinner to hide himself in a great cabinet, and remaining concealed there until he found himself inquired for.[83] Once, when he was compelled to write to a lady, declining an invitation to dinner, he wrote on pink paper, as adequately reflecting his blushes.[84] And even on that last desperate American tour, as Mrs. Fields records, precisely and with decorum: 'After *the* dinner (at the Parker) the other night, Mr. Dickens thought he would take a warm bath; but, the water being drawn, he began playing the clown in pantomime on the edge of the bath (with his clothes on) for the amusement of Dolby and Osgood; in a moment and before he knew where he was, he had tumbled in head over heels, clothes and all.' [85]

Dickens's mimetic instinct being what it was, it was inevitable that his pranks should sometimes involve the theatrical. Once, when together with Dolby and Wills, he found himself in a strange town, they came upon a little square which seemed to him to offer a perfect setting for a pantomime. 'Here the temptation to Mr. Dickens to indulge his predilections for imitating the frolics of a clown . . . presented itself. The street being entirely free from people, Mr. Dickens mounted three steps leading to one of the houses, which had an enormous brass plate on its green door; and, having given three raps on the door-post, was proceeding to lie down on the upper step, clown fashion, when the door suddenly opened and a stout woman appeared, to the intense amusement of the "pantaloon" (myself) and Wills, who immediately beat a retreat in the style known in pantomime as a "rally," followed by Mr. Dickens with an imaginary policeman after him.' [86]

The only cruel or inconsiderate pranks recorded in con-

nection with Dickens are those involving Eleanor Christian. It is she who tells the amazing story of how once at Brighton he seized her and waded out into the tide with her, assuming for the fun of it the aspect of a maddened lover, and screaming that he would hold her there until they were both submerged. And again: 'There was a sort of promontory stretching out into the sea, where, in rough weather, the waves used to rush up several feet, and come splashing down like a showerbath. On two occasions, when I had thoughtlessly ventured near this spot, he seized me and ran me, *nolens volens*, right under the cataract to the irretrievable ruin of two bonnets of frail fabric, and my slender purse was taxed to the utmost to replace them.' [87] It seems strange that Dickens did not repair the damage done on these occasions, the more so since Mrs. Dickens felt strongly his obligation to do so.

IV

It will be seen that when Dickens played, he played hard. I have already spoken of his energy in connection with his devotion to his art. It needs to be viewed now in somewhat broader aspects. 'When he read or spoke,' said Sir Arthur Helps, 'the whole man read or spoke.' [88] And Mr. Ley has a good phrase to describe him: 'the liver of life at full pressure.' [89] When James T. Fields met him, on his first visit to America, 'He seemed all on fire with curiosity, and alive as I never saw mortal before.' [90] And when he came again, so many years later, Mrs. Fields wrote Higginson that everything else stopped for them 'until the human hurricane had swept past.' [91] 'As he entered a room,' says Percy Fitzgerald, 'sat or stood before you, you felt you were

in the presence of amazing vitality.'[92] And Mrs. Carlyle, describing a birthday celebration at the Macreadys', says of Dickens and Forster that they 'exerted themselves till the perspiration was pouring down and they seemed *drunk* with their efforts.'[93] Nathaniel Hawthorne speaks of having been told how, during some performances in Liverpool, Dickens 'acted in play and farce, spent the rest of the night making speeches, feasting, and drinking at table, and ended at seven o'clock in the morning by jumping leap-frog over the backs of the whole company.'[94]

Even his dreams were invaded by the spirit of restlessness. 'Only last night, in my sleep, I was bent upon getting over a perspective of barriers, with my hands and feet bound. Pretty much what we are all about, waking, I think?'[95] The very week he died, he had ordered breakfast at 7.30 ('Sharp, mind!') instead of the usual time, 9, as he said he had so much to do before Friday,[96] and he stayed at his desk clear through until evening the last day of his conscious life.

It is most interesting to see the varied manifestations of this activity in the various phases of Dickens's life. When he wanted recreation, he did not rest: he gave readings, or he organized a theatrical company, or he did something else that provided nervous stimulation, without in any sense furnishing physical repose. In preparing his readings, it almost seems as if he made a deliberate effort to do as much work on them as possible. First he rewrote the portions of the books chosen. Then he rehearsed an incredible number of times: there were two hundred rehearsals, we are told, of 'Doctor Marigold.' Finally, to make assurance doubly sure, he committed all the readings to memory. His speeches, too, were prepared with elaborate care. And even recrea-

tion took on a serious character. Once he insisted that his daughter should teach him the polka. 'My father was as much in earnest about learning to do that wonderful step correctly, as though there were nothing of greater importance in the world. Often he would practice gravely in a corner, without either partner or music, and I remember one cold winter's night, his awakening with the fear that he had forgotten the step so strong upon him that, jumping out of bed, by the scant illumination of the old-fashioned rush-light, and to his own whistling, he diligently rehearsed its "one, two, three, one, two, three" until he was once more secure in his knowledge.' [97] And when it came to Sir Roger de Coverley, he had to rearrange the dance in order to make it strenuous enough to suit him: '... while the end couples are dancing, and the side couples are supposed to be still, my father would insist upon the sides keeping up a kind of jig step, and clapping his hands to add to the fun, and dancing at the backs of those whose enthusiasm he thought needed rousing, was himself never still for a moment until the dance was over.' [98]

In many ways, this energy of Dickens's must have been immensely useful to him, not only in his work, but in the general enthusiasm and ardor of his response to life as well. With such a temperament, life may be hard sometimes, but it is difficult to see how it could ever be dull. And its usefulness for others may best be inferred from Fields's story of the time when, out walking with Dickens, he suddenly missed him from his side. Hearing his voice from across the street, Fields clambered laboriously across the snowdrifts, and there was Dickens lifting up a blind man who had fallen down in the storm.[99]

But not always was his energy put to so definitely constructive a use. Dickens never learned how to conserve his energy: he never made the distinction between the important things — the things on which it is worth while to spend one's self — and the other, inconsequential things, from which a man ought to stay away in order to save his strength for what is really worth doing. To him all enterprises seemed to stand on an equal footing: when he gave himself at all, he gave himself completely. Charles Dickens the younger put his finger on the weakness of his father's position in this regard when he said of the readings that 'there was something of almost willful exaggeration, of a defiance of any possible over-fatigue, either of mind or body, in the feverish sort of energy with which these readings were entered upon and carried out.' [100]

It is not surprising to find that a man of this temperament should be marked by preciseness and exactitude in all things. He calls himself 'the exact, the unimpeachable, the correct, the balanced-and-worked-by-clock-work Dick —' [101] and he was not far from the truth. He prided himself on never being late for an appointment, and he was always greatly annoyed with those who were. 'When we started for Belfast,' wrote Percy Fitzgerald, 'I found Boz already seated in his carriage, though it was a full quarter before the time of departure. He never could understand or tolerate leaving a small margin, or "running it close."' [102]

Some may feel that Dickens carried exactness to the point of fussiness. It is evident that the interest he took in having things in order about the house, for example, was much more like what we should expect from a woman than from a man. 'Get things in their places,' he writes home

from Italy. 'I can't bear to picture them otherwise.' [103] And his daughter tells us that he used to visit every room in the house each morning, 'and if a chair was out of its place, or a blind not quite straight, or a crumb left on the floor, woe betide the offender.' [104] He was equally precise with his own person: thus he had a perfect horror of falling asleep in public, and always he resisted the temptation, no matter how tired he might be. More suggestive of what we usually associate with the artistic temperament is the group of bronze figures which he had arranged before him on his writing-table, and without which he felt it impossible to write. He always wrote with ink, never with pencil, even in the case of insignificant memoranda, and his passion for neatness amounted to a mania. There is an amusing instance of this in an early letter to Kolle: 'As I was not aware of the melancholy fact in sufficient time to send for you (I mean *to* you, but I do not like scratching out) . . .' [105] On another occasion he writes Wills: 'The title of "The Amusements of the People" has to be altered as I have marked it. I would as soon have my hair cut off, as an intolerable Scotch shortness put into my titles by the elision of little words.' [106] Finally, Henry Fielding Dickens tells us that his father always made a shorthand copy of his manuscripts and of important letters.[107]

Two things, no doubt, made it easier for Dickens to achieve exactitude: his great capacity for observation and his wonderful memory. Arthur Helps says that Dickens saw nine objects always for every one that he saw himself, and this is by no means an uncorroborated bit of testimony. William Edrupt, once his office-boy, adds a word to show that his eyes were not the only one of his five senses that he

knew how to use: 'I think Mr. Dickens was a man who lived a lot by his nose. He seemed to be always smelling things. When we walked down the Thames he would sniff and sniff — "I love the very smell of this," he used to say.' [108] Instances of amazing observation recorded in his novels I simply cannot linger over: the subject is too fascinating and the field is too vast. Mrs. Gamp running her nose along the top of the fender, Plornish picking a bit of lime out of his whisker, and Mrs. Gargery cutting bread — these must suffice for illustrations. As for memory, recall that he drew Mrs. Pipchin from his remembrance of a lodging-house keeper he had known when he was two years old, but had not seen since, and that he remembered the *initials* of the Reverend W. H. Drage, whom he had known in his childhood, through a period of twenty-seven intervening years, until he had occasion to address a letter to him once more!

Along with this observation went quick, intuitive judgment, and he seems to have trusted his judgment implicitly, never revising his opinion of any one whom he had trusted in his youth. There is a remarkable instance of his childish insight here in connection with his early observation of a dissolute neighbor. 'I saw his bed rolled up in a corner; and what plates, and dishes, and pots he had, on a shelf; and I knew (God knows how) that the two girls with the shock heads were Captain Porter's natural children, and that the dirty lady was not married to Captain P.' [109]

I cannot help feeling that Dickens's eagerness and energy were somehow based upon, or at least connected with, his optimism, his sense that there was something wonderful about life and the world. The attempt which some of his contemporaries were already beginning to make — to reduce

CHARLES DICKENS, 1838

From an engraving by Edward Stodart after a drawing by Samuel Laurence
The remarque is from Laurence's drawing of Fanny Dickens (1836)

everything to a scientific basis, to explain everything and explain it away — he had no sympathy with whatever, and he fought the ideal of a purely scientific education all his life. For himself he believed sincerely in the fantastic, the romantic, the imaginative — 'That fusion of the graces of the imagination with the realities of life, which is vital to the welfare of any community.' [110]

Dickens's optimism has been noted by numerous critics, never more interestingly than by Mr. Galsworthy, who points out, along this line, the marked contrast between Dickens and his own contemporaries: 'Early Victorian personages, and novelists (even the three Charleses — Dickens, Reade, and Kingsley — for all their generous revolt against particular evils) solidly accepted the conventions, morals, standards, ideals, and enterprises of their day; believed with all their hearts that life was worth while; regarded values as absolute, lacked ironic misgivings, and all sense that existence was a funny business.' [111] And Professor Nathaniel Wright Stephenson has gone farther still, and has pointed out that in this respect Dickens was more rather than less hopeful than his period. '. . . Dickens . . . was not among the writers who are the peculiar expression of his time. Rather, he like Browning seems a great intruder, a reincarnation of some younger, more trustful age, or else the herald of a mightier age to come. We smile at his crudities; we may condemn his methods; but the heart of man responds steadily to his exuberant conviction that in the long run right will win. If we show him a case in which "robber wrong" prevails, he replies, "That is an exception," and pounds on fearlessly with his gospel, "Be not afraid." ' [112]

The modern pessimist is quite likely to feel that all this

simply manifests Dickens's shallowness, but that explanation will hardly carry water. For Dickens lived — lived more widely and intensely — and received more terrific blows from life than many of the modern pessimists have known. He did not get everything he wanted, any more than the rest of us get it, nor did he ever

Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed.

Yet, when sorrow came to him, he never gave in. 'I have been in trouble,' he wrote Mitton in 1851, 'or I should have written to you sooner. My wife has been, and is, far from well. My poor father's death caused me much distress. I came to London last Monday to preside at a public dinner — played with little Dora, my youngest child, before I went, and was told when I left the chair that she had died in a moment. I am quite happy again, but I have undergone a good deal.' [113] There is no question that he suffered intensely at such times, but he recovered from his suffering, and he did not go on to view all of life, as so many do, through the mist his own sorrows had created. 'Men who look on nature, and their fellow men, and cry that all is dark and gloomy,' he exclaims, 'are in the right; but the sombre colors are reflections from their own jaundiced eyes and hearts.' [114]

So for him life was essentially a warm-hearted business. 'I feel more and more that to be thoroughly in earnest is everything, and to be anything short of it is nothing.' [115] He realized that his natural exuberance sometimes betrayed him into what might seem to others like ridiculous emotionalism. 'My dear Washington Irving, I cannot thank you enough for your cordial and generous praise, or tell you what

deep and lasting gratification it has given me. I hope to have many letters from you, and to exchange a frequent correspondence. I send this to say so. After the first two or three I shall settle down into a connected style, and become gradually rational.' [116] But on the whole he was always ready to take a chance on optimism and enthusiasm and whole-hearted earnestness rather than to risk anything on their opposites.

V

In politics Dickens had comparatively little interest at any time, and what interest he had tended steadily to decline as he grew older. He was not without executive ability himself, as his theatrical and journalistic enterprises alike show, but he never cared for executive work for its own sake, and he steered clear of all political obligations just as much as he possibly could. Mr. Ley has recently insisted that Dickens's refusal to stand for Parliament was motived by his poverty and not at all by contempt for the office under consideration.[117] If so, I can only feel that it was a singularly fortunate poverty, for Dickens would have been as much out of place in Parliament as he was for a time when he tried to edit a daily newspaper.

In early life, Dickens hoped that the political problem might have been solved in America, but his first visit here served amply to disillusion him on that score. Some of his denunciations of British politics are almost savage. In one place he likens politicians to Cheap Jacks, and in another he compares the opening of a Parliamentary session to a pantomime and the king's address to the opening speech of the clown.[118]

It is in his personal letters, of course, that Dickens is most frank in expressing his ideas concerning the government. Thus he writes Macready as early as 1849: 'Oh! that I had the wings of a dove, and could flee (with a select circle) to some pleasant climate where there are no royal speeches and no professed politicians. Heavens and earth! to read the circumcised dog, Disraeli, a-propos of War and Cobden!' [119] In 1856 he goes even farther, '... I have no present political faith or hope — not a grain.' [120] And the next year, to Bulwer, '... it appears to me that the House of Commons and Parliament altogether, is just the dreariest failure and nuisance that has bothered this much-bothered world.' [121] The very year before his death he declares roundly, 'that representative government is become altogether a failure with us, that the English gentilities and subserviences render the people unfit for it, and that the whole thing has broken down since that great seventeenth-century time, and has no hope in it.' [122] Yet I think his humanity and his prejudice alike are shown most delightfully in the remark he made after meeting the 'circumcised dog' above referred to: 'What a delightful man he is! what an extraordinary pity it is that he should ever have given up literature for politics!' [123]

VI

Since Dickens was himself an artist, it is natural to expect to find art of one kind or another playing a rather important part in his daily life. By way of prelude, let us look for a moment at his sensitiveness to beauty in general.

In the early novels especially, nature passages are very common. Generally it is the smiling aspects of Nature that

are singled out for praise. 'The Pickwick Papers' is very rich from this point of view. In the next novel, 'Oliver Twist,' Nature is a blessed factor in Oliver's recovery — much as, so long afterward, Nature helps David Copperfield in his spiritual recovery after the death of Dora. Dickens himself — to pass somewhat abruptly from art to life — was passionately fond of flowers and always had some on his desk while writing. In late years, he did much of his work out in the garden, in the Swiss chalet which Fechter had presented to him, and here he actually installed mirrors to reflect the sunshine on the leaves outside. He felt intensely the mystery and charm of the sea. '. . . I walked, by the cliffs, to Folkstone and back to-day, when it was so exquisitely beautiful that, though I was alone, I could not keep silence on the subject.' [124] In Switzerland, in Italy, and at Niagara, he responded enthusiastically to scenic charm. To be sure, this was not always the primary consideration. Sometimes he seems to overlook beauty entirely. For Dickens was always the humanitarian, and when beauty was shadowed by misery, it was the human element that received all his attention. This was the case at Naples, and, I think, accounts for his dissatisfaction with that city. 'Naples disappointed me greatly. The weather was bad during a great part of my stay there. But if I had not had mud, I should have had dust, and though I had had sun, I must still have had the Lazzaroni. And they are so ragged, so dirty, so abject, so full of degradation, so sunken and steeped in the hopelessness of better things, that they would make heaven uncomfortable, if they could ever get there.' [125] But when no such complicating elements are present, and he is free to follow his natural æsthetic bent, he

feels much more deeply, as, for example, when he goes into ecstasies over Venice: 'I had great expectations of Venice, but they fell immeasurably short of the wonderful reality. The short time I passed there went by me in a dream. I hardly think it possible to exaggerate its beauties, its sources of interest, its uncommon novelty and freshness. A thousand and one nights could scarcely captivate and enchant me more than Venice.' [126]

Color and light exercised a tremendous appeal to him always. I have already spoken of his gay raiment, and his taste in house furnishings would seem to have been equally unrestrained. When he went out on picnics, it seems he wanted even to eat in the glare of the sun,[127] and his writing-desk at Gadshill was placed so that he had to write facing the light. The scarlet geranium was his favorite flower: his daughter could not remember ever having heard him express any special admiration for a purely white flower.[128] His love of color was indeed something of a source of amusement to the other members of his family: his younger daughter once told him that when he became an angel, his wings would be made of looking-glass and his crown of scarlet geraniums.[129]

But the most delightful story along this line comes from Ireland and dates from the year before his death. On this occasion, Frank Finlay, an editor, who was entertaining him, ordered a splendid equipage from the livery stable to drive him about in. When the thing arrived, 'It was a huge landau, or barouche . . . hung on lofty springs, painted as to the body in blue, with blazing scarlet wheels and underworks. This stupendous vehicle was drawn by two large white horses, and driven by a coachman in a blue coat with silver buttons, a white hat, brown top boots, white gloves,

and a red nose.' He was about to send the carriage away and order something quieter when Dickens put in his appearance: 'What! send away that carriage! I never had such a chance in my life! I wouldn't miss a drive in that carriage for worlds! I never saw so splendid a carriage as that; I never hope to see another; I never dreamed that I should one day drive in such a magnificent turnout! No, no, that carriage for me — or none!' So Finlay was forced to enter the contraption with his guest and drive about the city in it.[130]

In spite of the fact that Dickens had numerous friends who were artists, he had no technical knowledge of art. 'I am not mechanically acquainted with the art of painting, and have no other means of judging of a picture than as I see it resembling and refining upon nature, and presenting graceful combinations of forms and colours.'[131] Conventionality wearied him in painting, much as it did everywhere else. Especially in Italian art did he feel its burden. Being a man of independent judgment in all things, he refused to repeat the current cant about pictures which everybody else was repeating and insisted instead on looking at them with his own eyes. This is an admirable ideal, but of course they were thoroughly untrained eyes, and frequently I am reminded of Mark Twain's judgments in 'The Innocents Abroad.' Sometimes he was trapped into extravagant statements, or at least statements which he had not sufficient knowledge to make in anything like so definite a way. On one occasion Tintoretto's 'Assembly of the Blest' is 'the most wonderful and charming picture ever painted'; on another, it is Paul de la Roche's fresco in the Palais des Beaux Arts in Paris that he calls 'the greatest work of art in the world.' Often he found himself preferring an engrav-

ing to the original work. Pictures with a story, or with a sentimental appeal — for example, the picture of Beatrice Cenci — appealed to him with special force. In general, he thought French art stronger than English, partly because of 'the great brightness and brilliancy which is commonly achieved on the Continent, in . . . fresco painting,' [132] but more because the French seemed to him to manifest greater vigor and independence of spirit than the English. The Pre-Raphaelite movement he hated because he thought of it as making war on idealism. His collection of French and Oriental bric-à-brac is said to have been a fine one.[133]

Dickens's references to architecture are not numerous, but quite uniformly they exhibit good taste. He hated the monotony often inspired in the name of modern commercialism, and he hated tasteless amplitude and over-ornamentation quite as much. Thus he speaks of Saint Peter's in Rome as 'an immense edifice, with no one point for the mind to rest upon; and it tires itself with wandering round and round. The very purpose of the place, is not expressed in anything you see there, unless you examine into details — and all examination of details is incompatible with the place itself.' [134] And the Scott monument in Edinburgh always looked to him like a Gothic spire, 'taken off and stuck in the ground.' [135]

Music, Dickens was compelled to approach from the literary and the emotional side, and as a result his interest was largely confined to singing. In his youth he tried to learn to play the piano, but a rarely honest teacher told his parents it was robbery to go on with the lessons. He is said to have possessed a good ear and a good voice, and he sometimes sang serio-comic songs to amuse himself and his

friends. The rôle played by music in the diversions of the early years is perhaps sufficiently indicated by a comment in one of the Kolle letters, written while moving: 'The piano will most likely go to Bentnick Street today, and as I have already said, we cannot accompany it, so that the piano will be in one place and we in another.' [136] He seems to have felt it a terrible deprivation. In later years he was fond of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Mozart.

But on the whole it must be concluded that Dickens valued singing because it was associated in his mind with cheerfulness and sociability, rather than for any purely musical qualities. How suggestive in this connection is Kitton's statement: 'His eldest daughter . . . avers that her father would listen to playing or singing by the hour together, and was very critical as to the proper pronunciation and the distinct articulation of words.' [137] Once he criticizes the bad chorus at the Italian opera, and he has the honor of having regarded 'Trovatore' as rubbish.[138] On the other hand, he fairly went into ecstasy over Gounod's 'Faust,' though he has much less to say about the music than about the beautiful lighting! 'I could hardly bear the thing, it affected me so.' [139] James T. Lightwood, who has written a book on 'Dickens and Music,' concludes his discussion as follows: '. . . there is perhaps, no great writer who has made a more extensive use of music to illustrate character and create incident than Charles Dickens. From an historical point of view, these references are of the utmost importance, for they reflect to a nicety the general condition of ordinary musical life in England during the middle of the last century.' [140] Well, that statement implies a good deal concerning Dickens's musical taste and knowledge.

VII

But there was one art that interested Dickens more than painting or architecture or music, and that was the art of the theater. Here, indeed, was one of the abiding passions of his life. In 1846, he declared that he had never gone to the theater in his life without carrying some happy impression away with him.[141] Think of what the theater was in the nineteenth century — or, indeed, what it is in the twentieth — and you will appreciate how much Dickens must have loved it! In early life he went to the theater, with very few exceptions, every night for at least three years.[142] Even so, he did not have enough: time and again, he translates life itself into theatrical terms.[143]

He was not exclusive in his theatrical tastes. To be sure, the sad condition of the nineteenth-century theater has often been exaggerated. The new plays were nothing to boast of certainly, but the old ones — the classics — were still alive, much more regularly and continuously visible than they are to-day, and they were often superbly acted. It would not be fair to Dickens to leave the impression that he was not aware that the drama of his day was in a somewhat parlous state. He refers to its artificiality often enough,[144] though to be sure he is often guilty of taking some of it over into his novels. But he quite frankly enjoyed many things in the theater which, as he must have known, were not in the highest degree artistic. Two of his greatest favorites were Frédéric Lemaître, the melodrama actor, and Charles Mathews, a quick-change artist of the music halls. He preferred John E. Owen to Joseph Jefferson. And several aspects of theatrical entertainment not in any sense 'legitimate' — clowns, puppets, and circuses — made a great

appeal to him. Only the dismal 'instructive' exhibits of the day bored him greatly, and if one may generalize on the basis of a reference in 'Pickwick,' he did not relish the 'art' of the contortionist.

It is sometimes alleged that it was only popular art that appealed to Dickens on the stage, that to great acting and great drama he made no response. Along this line, his dislike of the French and Italian classical drama is cited, while his characterization of 'Orestes' as 'Really one of the absurdest things I ever saw,' and his complete failure to respond to Ristori also come in for their share of attention. This is, however, not the whole story. It can hardly be pretended that Macready was a popular artist, or Fechter, or Pauline Viardot, yet Dickens was wildly enthusiastic about all of them. Somewhat less intensely, he responded also to Grisi and to Plessy. Moreover, he recognized the genius of Sir Henry Irving as early as 1868, long before that great actor had achieved fame.

Not only did Dickens love the theater: he believed in it. It presented problems, of course, as everything that is human and alive presents problems. The dissipated, abandoned actor, the hanger-on of the stage — you find him in 'The Stroller's Tale' in 'Pickwick' — was one phase of the problem in a painfully concrete form. Generally, however, the actors in Dickens's novels are kindly and loving and good. He had a special tenderness for them always, and he felt a sense of almost personal injury when they were slandered or maligned. 'I wish, myself, that we were not so often pleased to think ill of those who minister to our amusement. I am far from having satisfied my heart that either we or they are a bit the better for it.' [145] And in Mr. Sleary,

of 'Hard Times,' the profession speaks for itself: 'Don't be croth with uth poor vagabondth. People mutht be amuthed. They can't be alwayth a learning, nor yet they can't be alwayth a working, they an't made for it. You mutht have uth, Thquire. Do the withe thing and the kind thing too, and make the bethe of uth; not the wortht!' [146] For Dickens himself the actor was much more than an entertainer: he taught tolerance and kindliness and fired the imagination. 'We would rather not have to appeal to the generous sympathies of a man of five-and-twenty, in respect of some affliction of which he had had no personal experience, who had passed all his holidays, when a boy, among cranks and cogwheels. We should be more disposed to trust him if he had been brought into occasional contact with a Maid and a Magpie; if he had made one or two diversions into the Forest of Bondy; or had even gone the length of a Christmas Pantomime.' [147]

One of the reasons why Dickens sympathized so much with actors was, as has already been implied, that he himself possessed a generous share of the actor's temperament. The several stories of his having actually appeared at minor theaters in his early days now seem to rest upon insufficient evidence, though he did once apply for a position at Covent Garden. But we have his own statement for it that in the old days he used to practice acting '(even such things as walking in and out, and sitting down in a chair): often four, five, six hours a day': [148] and the ardor with which he threw himself into his dramatic work later is simply amazing. 'The *furor* has come strong upon me again, and I began to be once more of opinion that nature intended me for the lessee of a national theatre, and that pen, ink, and paper have spoiled a manager.' [149] And Otis Skinner records Dick-

ens having told Edmund Yates that his great disappointment in life was not to have been a successful actor. 'When Yates replied: "But, Charles, you are a great novelist," he returned, "that's all very well, but I would rather have been a great actor and had the public at my feet."' [150]

As it was, he did most of his acting off the stage. 'Assumption has charms for me so delightful — I hardly know for how many wild reasons — that I feel a loss of Oh I can't say what exquisite foolery, when I lose a chance of being some one not in the remotest degree like myself.' [151] He began early. Even in his infancy, he identified himself in imagination with the characters in the books he read, and not much later he began to entertain his friends with impersonations. Forster prints three letters written 'in character' — one from Micawber, one from Captain Bobadil, and one from a waterside character. He was everlastingly reënacting experiences he had had: once he even reënacted the scenes of the Staplehurst accident! [152] 'Sir John R. Robinson recalls the occasion in St. James's Square when Dickens went to help a policeman to secure a struggling thief.... The man was handcuffed and Dickens offered to accompany the policeman to the station; and, says Robinson, "his voice, his air, his walk, made me think of some accomplished artist called upon to represent all this upon the stage. He was consciously acting a part."' [153]

On his writing, the theatrical interest was, of course, profound. So thoroughly grounded a Dickensian as Walter Dexter goes so far as to say that 'Dickens created his characters first as an actor.' [154] And recently, in his excellent book, 'The Actor in Dickens,' Mr. J. B. Van Amerongen has studied the matter in detail, pointing out not only the obvi-

ous things, previously noticed by other critics — such as the sensational plots, the vivid descriptions of people, the rapid dialogue — but also, what is much more important, that it was Dickens's intense dramatic feeling that made his characters seem alive. He identified himself with them, and his most striking scenes are 'indelibly impressed on our minds' as seen through their eyes.[155] This gives the theater a larger share in Dickens's art than it has ever seemed to possess before, and lends a special appropriateness to Ward's saying that, on the whole, it was fitting he should be buried in Westminster Abbey, close to the graves of Garrick and of Henderson. '... his generous spirit would not have disdained the thought that he would seem even in death the players' friend.'[156]

VIII

But we have not yet considered the one art of which Dickens knew more than he knew about all the other arts put together — that is, the art of writing. I have, indeed, already spoken of his attitude toward his own work. There remains, however, his interest in literature in general.

There is no evidence in Dickens's letters that he was a very wide reader. Forster recognizes this, and warns us not to do Dickens an injustice in this respect, by reminding us that he was never the man to refer much to books, either in his letters or in conversation with his friends, and that, especially in the intervals between novels, his reading was considerable.[157] Nevertheless, he was always much too busy a man to allow himself the time necessary for really extensive reading.

Of his first books, Dickens himself has told us: David Copperfield's famous list of the books left by his father in

the little room upstairs, the books in which his boyhood reveled, is, as Forster tells us, 'one of the many passages in "Copperfield" which are literally true.'[158] That list consists of 'Roderick Random,' 'Peregrine Pickle,' 'Humphrey Clinker,' 'Tom Jones,' 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' 'Don Quixote,' 'Gil Blas,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' 'The Arabian Nights,' 'The Tales of the Genii,' and several volumes of voyages and travels,[159] and Dickens never speaks of any other books with the same rapture with which he speaks of these.[160] Other books of his youth were 'The Tatler,' 'The Spectator,' 'The Idler,' 'The Citizen of the World,' Mrs. Inchbald's 'Collection of Farces,'[161] 'The Scottish Chiefs,' Holbein's 'The Dance of Death,' George Colman's 'Broad Grins,'[162] and the 'Terrific Register,' a penny dreadful weekly which may perhaps have awakened his appetite for horrors.[163] George Gissing reminds us that we need also to consider the Bible, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Sterne, Scott, and Carlyle in any list of the books that influenced Dickens, and after pointing out that there are more references in Dickens to 'The Arabian Nights' than to any other book, concludes that 'Few really great men can have had so narrow an intellectual scope.'[164] Fields tells us that he spoke often of Cobbett, De Quincey, Sydney Smith, and Carlyle, and that one of his favorite books was Pepys's 'Diary.'[165] He once gave a young lady a reading list which included Buckle's 'Civilisation,' Froude, Macaulay's 'History' and 'Essays,' and certain books of travel and biography.[166] Among American writers, his favorite was certainly Washington Irving.[167] Henry Fielding Dickens says his father once told him that Carlyle had influenced his work more than any other writer.[168] That list, especially when supple-

mented by the other books yet to be mentioned, may surely be pronounced a respectable one, but it is hardly more than that.

As for his critical judgments, it is well to begin with Shelton MacKenzie's statement that he undervalued Shakespeare as a careless writer, thought the gravedigger scene and the smothering of Desdemona beneath the dignity of tragedy, and called Hamlet 'that prosy chap.'[169] I find no corroboration of this anywhere, and I am not disposed to take MacKenzie's unsupported word for anything. For over fifty years, his was the worst of all Dickens books; then Mr. Bechhofer Roberts's 'This Side Idolatry' appeared, and Dickensian literature promptly sounded hitherto unsuspected depths. I think there is abundant evidence in the frequency with which Dickens refers to Shakespeare and the interest he takes in performances of his plays,[170] both that he valued the great dramatist and had a good general knowledge of his work. When he was in America the first time, he carried a Shakespeare about with him in his pocket, though whether this was for love of Shakespeare, or for love of Forster, who had given him the book, I really cannot say. Forster refers once to Dickens's keeping Shakespeare's birthday as a holiday,[171] and once we find the novelist himself proposing a rather silly emendation in Hamlet's suicide soliloquy.[172] But, of course, his knowledge was not scholarly or exact in any way, and Percy Fitzgerald has pointed out conveniently that the very mottoes used for both 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round' are inaccurate quotations.[173] Holman Hunt records that on one occasion, when Dickens was asked to name his favorite passage in Shakespeare, he replied 'that the question was one difficult

to answer, for that he loved so many,' and then went on to speak of Falstaff's recruiting scene with Shallow.[174] Well, there is a good deal implied in that.

Other writers, of course, afford much less decisive tests. Dickens immensely admired Fielding and Smollett from his boyhood association with them. On the other hand, he utterly failed to appreciate Richardson,[175] or Wordsworth,[176] or, apparently Jane Austen.[177] He speaks of Chaucer once in a letter, and quotes a portion of the description of the Pardoner.[178] When he went to Italy, he was hoping to be able to live in the house that Byron had occupied.[179] He had an extravagant admiration for Tennyson,[180] and Browning,[181] though the popular imitations of Tennyson, 'full of strange conceits and strange metre,' did not please him. He recognized George Eliot's gifts at the very beginning of her career, upon the appearance of 'Scenes of Clerical Life,' and immediately guessed that the author was a woman.[182] He had some appreciation, too, of Meredith.[183] And of course he loved the melodrama writers of the day, like his friend, Bulwer-Lytton, the French Paul de Kock, and at the very end, his American disciple, Bret Harte. Occasionally you catch him reading extensively in a writer like Voltaire, by whom I at least should not have expected him to be in any way attracted. He knew and appreciated Daudet also and several other modern French writers as well. On the other hand, he found 'The Scarlet Letter' altogether unconvincing.[184] In his lighter moments he enjoyed books of travel and exploration, especially those dealing with Africa.

But the humanity bound up in books was always much less fascinating to Dickens than the humanity with which he came in contact at first hand. It is to this that we must now turn.

CHAPTER IV

DICKENS AND HUMANITY

ALTHOUGH all men are not philosophers, still, consciously or unconsciously, every man divides his world into two parts: the Me and the Not-Me. Generally his attitude toward the second is determined, to a fairly large extent, by what he thinks of the first. It is therefore that it becomes necessary to approach the consideration of 'Dickens and Humanity' with a brief study of the man's attitude toward himself, not this time as an artist, but as a human being.

That his opinion, on the whole, was favorable, admits, I think, of no dispute. He was a self-made man, and if he did not quite (as has been said of Ben Jonson) adore his maker, at least he must be said to have thought rather well of him. He took himself and his concerns seriously and he insisted always that others take them seriously as well. He was eager for recognition, always anxious to be set right before the world, wanted others to take him at his own proper evaluation of himself. His clothes, his signature, his very nicknames — Chief, Inimitable, Wenerables — were all those of a man who felt rather sure of himself. And he was always anxious to have his children testify that their father was proud of the ladder by which he had risen. 'If it were otherwise, I should have but a very poor opinion of their father, which, perhaps, upon the whole, I have not.' [1]

There is a very amusing illustration of all this in connection with the growth of Dickens's whiskers, a decoration of which Forster, at first, did not, by any means, approve. In-

deed, the proposed Frith painting was held up some time by Forster in the expectation that the whim would pass and Dickens's mouth and chin again be revealed. But all such hopes were rudely shattered. 'The moustaches are glorious, glorious. I have cut them shorter, and trimmed them a little at the ends to improve the shape.' [2] Again he explained jocularly: 'The beard saves me the trouble of shaving, and much as I admired my own appearance before I allowed my beard to grow, I admire it much more now, and never neglect, when an opportunity offers, to gaze my fill at myself. If any friends don't like my looks, I am not at all anxious for them to waste their time in studying them; and as to Frith, he would surely prefer to save himself the trouble of painting features which are so difficult as a mouth and chin. Besides, I have been told by some of my friends, that they approve of the change, *because they now see less of me.*' [3]

If I may pause here for a moment to speak of my method, I would say that these remarks illustrate a type of utterance which is extremely tricky for the psychographer. Obviously it would be absurd to take them at their face value, or to expect others to do so. But we have no right to reject them altogether, or to assume that, beneath the conscious extravagance and fantastic exaggeration, there is nothing that wants to be taken seriously. Can any one imagine Abraham Lincoln writing thus of himself, or Shakespeare, or Robert E. Lee? That Dickens could and did do so, and that the utterance seems characteristic, is surely not without some significance for the understanding of his character.

Again along this line, there is Dickens's sensitiveness in the matter of photographs. This, too, is gorgeous psychographic material, for the excellent reason that nothing is

stated: one reads delightfully between the lines. I have long suspected that Dickens's real objection to seeing his pictures in shop-windows was that he did not consider them good likenesses. It was quite a general opinion among his friends that his photographs were not good, and especially that they did not do justice to the beauty of his eyes. In 1861, he wrote to one photographer of a picture he did not like: 'It has a grim and wasted aspect, and might perhaps be made useful as a portrait of the Ancient Mariner.'[4] To do him justice, however, it was not always the pretty pictures that he liked: one grotesque cartoon of himself sent him into paroxysms of enjoyment.[5] But the most revealing photography story is that which Thomas Woolner tells. Toward the end of his life, Dickens decided he would have no more photographs taken. Woolner, who seems to have been a clever man, wheedled him into promising a sitting by asking him if he were wholly satisfied with any of his portraits. He replied in the negative. 'Then,' said Woolner, 'your works having pleased your countrymen so long, your portrait has become a national necessity.' Hereupon Dickens, much pleased, 'burst out laughing, and said, "If you put it in that form, I do not see how I am to resist."'[6]

In a somewhat more serious way, Dickens's self-esteem and independence are illustrated in his relations with Queen Victoria. When the novelist and his company were playing 'The Frozen Deep' for Douglas Jerrold's benefit in 1857, Her Majesty asked to have the play performed at court so that she might see it. Dickens promptly declined to appear as an entertainer where he could not appear as a guest, and accordingly proposed instead that a special performance should be given in honor of the Queen and her guests at the

Gallery of Illustration. This invitation was accepted, and on the night of the performance, the Queen sent for Dickens to come to her box. 'I replied that I was in my Farce dress, and must beg to be excused. Whereupon she sent again, saying that the dress "could not be so ridiculous as that," and repeating the request. I sent my duty in reply, but again hoped Her Majesty would have the kindness to excuse my presenting myself in a costume and appearance that were not my own.' [7] According to Mrs. Fields, Dickens never felt any too kindly toward Queen Victoria for the not inconsiderable expense she made him in connection with this special performance.[8]

The following year, Her Majesty wished to hear Dickens read 'A Christmas Carol.' He sent to 'express my hope that she would indulge me by making one of some audience or other — for I thought an audience necessary to the effect.' This request, Queen Victoria, for some reason, did not feel able to grant, and, apparently feeling that she had made enough advances to this independent subject, she troubled him no more until finally they met and talked for an hour very shortly before Dickens's death.[9]

In an early bit of doggerel called 'The Bill of Fare,' Dickens says of himself that he was wide awake to the faults of his friends, but blind to his own. This is a rather harsh judgment, which no man who really deserved it could pass upon himself, though he goes on to say that his faults were all of the head rather than of the heart, and gives himself credit for never forgetting a kindness.[10] Well, Dickens as a boy seems to have been much the same creature as Dickens the man. There is development, of course, but the essential nature of the personality remained unaltered to a somewhat unusual

degree. And there is a world of implication, it seems to me, concerning both boy and man in the way in which the latter looked back to that unhappy period of his childhood when he was employed in a blacking warehouse. Only once did he speak of it to Forster, and never apparently to any one else. But the memory of his agony would seem to have haunted him always, for 'Until old Hungerford Market was pulled down, until old Hungerford Stairs were destroyed, and the very nature of the ground changed, I never had the courage to go back to the place where my servitude began. I never saw it. I could not endure to go near it. For many years, when I came near to Robert Warren's in the Strand, I crossed over to the opposite side of the way, to avoid a certain smell of the cement they put upon the blacking-corks, which reminded me of what I was once. It was a very long time before I liked to go up Chandos Street. My old way home by the borough made me cry, after my eldest child could speak.'

It was not the work involved that crushed the child's soul. He was never afraid of work, and he was to work much harder later on and be happy over it. It was the feeling of degradation that came to him: 'No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these every-day associates with those of my happier childhood; and felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man crushed in my breast. The deep remembrance of the sense I had of being utterly neglected and hopeless; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that, day by day, what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and emulation by, was passing away from

me, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written. My whole nature was so prostrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forget in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander back desolately to that time of my life.'

About this time, Dickens's sister Fanny won a prize at the Royal Academy of Music. Dickens was present at the exercises: 'I could not bear to think of myself — beyond the reach of all such honorable emulation and success. The tears ran down my face. I felt as if my heart were rent. I prayed, when I went to bed that night, to be lifted out of the humiliation and neglect in which I was. I never had suffered so much before. There was no envy in this.'

What hurt him most was his conviction that he was being heartlessly and unnecessarily neglected: 'It is wonderful to me how I could have been so easily cast away at such an age. It is wonderful to me, that, even after my descent into the poor little drudge I had been since we came to London, no one had compassion enough on me — a child of singular abilities, quick, eager, delicate, and soon hurt, bodily or mentally — to suggest that something might have been spared, as certainly it might have been, to place me at any common school. Our friends, I take it, were tired out. No one made any sign. My father and mother were quite satisfied. They could hardly have been more so, if I had been twenty years of age, distinguished at a grammar-school, and going to Cambridge.'

However, he did not, by any means, lose his self-respect: 'But I held some station at the blacking warehouse too. Besides that my relative at the counting-house did what a

man so occupied, and dealing with a thing so anomalous, could, to treat me as one upon a different footing from the rest, I never said, to man or boy, how it was that I came to be there, or gave the least indication of being sorry that I was there. That I suffered in secret, and that I suffered exquisitely, no one ever knew but I. How much I suffered, it is, as I have said already, utterly beyond my power to tell. No man's imagination can overstep the reality. But I kept my own counsel, and I did my work. I knew from the first, that if I could not do my work as well as any of the rest, I could not hold myself above slight and contempt. I soon became at least as expeditious, and as skilful with my hands, as either of the other boys. Though perfectly familiar with them, my conduct and manners were different enough from theirs to place a space between us.'

I have given thus at length the oft-told story of the blacking warehouse because it seems to me unusually rich in revealing both the strength and the weakness of Dickens's character. His sensitiveness, his horror of cruelty, his sympathy with children — they are all here. But his sentimentality, his tremendous capacity for self-pity are here also, and his exalted estimate of himself informs every line. Finally, when you add to the words already quoted, what is perhaps the most revealing touch in the whole description — 'I do not write resentfully or angrily: for I know how all these things have worked together to make me what I am' — the picture is complete.[11]

The same tendencies revealed here appear again in other aspects of his life. He had a disposition to think himself unique, not only with regard to his talents and affections — 'I don't think there ever was love like that I bear her' [12] —

but even in connection with the insignificant, unexplainable happenings of daily life. More than once he speaks of 'a most absurd accident . . . which certainly would never have happened to any one but myself.' [13]

He was also a man of remarkable confidence in his own judgments, not only in matters of art, but even in other things, some of them so far out of his province that he had no right to entertain an opinion on the subject at all. He is in his own field, for example, when he writes as follows to his American friend Professor Felton, referring to their differences over 'Martin Chuzzlewit': 'If I thought it in the nature of things that you and I could ever agree on paper, touching a certain Chuzzlewitian question whereupon Forster tells me you have remarks to make, I should immediately walk into the same, tooth and nail. But as I don't, I won't. Contenting myself with this prediction, that one of these years and days, you will write or say to me: "My dear Dickens, you were right, though rough, and did a world of good, though you got most thoroughly hated for it." To which I shall reply: "My dear Felton, I looked a long way off and not immediately under my nose." . . . At which sentiment you will laugh, and I shall laugh; and then (for I foresee this will happen in my land) we shall call for another pot of porter and two or three dozen of oysters.' [14] But consider, alongside of this, the almost equal confidence with which he advances his ludicrous notion that the Negro problem in America will speedily solve itself through the Negroes dying out of a country they are not fitted to live in! [15]

Of course Dickens himself always insisted that nobody was more ready than he was to accept advice. Did he not try out his reading of the murder scene from 'Oliver Twist'

on a company of friends before deciding whether or not he would read it in public? To be sure he did. Only, as G. A. Sala observes justly: 'They would, I take it, have been unanimous in favorable opinion had the lecturer recited, "My name is Norval," or stood upon his head,' [16] and he must have known beforehand that this would be the case. Dickens's heart was set on that murder. Can any one seriously suppose that if his friends had failed him, he would have given up his cherished plan?

A much more interesting instance is W. P. Frith's criticism of his Sam Weller reading. Frith was displeased with Sam: he found the jaunty cock-sureness of the character missing altogether from Dickens's interpretation. He told Dickens about it, who smiled and made no reply. Shortly afterward, a friend of Frith's went to hear the 'Pickwick' reading, and returned to upbraid the artist for having given him a false report of it. Yes, said Dickens, when the problem was placed before him, 'I altered it a little — made it smarter.' Frith expressed surprise and pleasure, alluding to the general impression that it was not Dickens's habit to follow advice. He replied characteristically: 'On the contrary, whenever I am wrong I am obliged to any one who will tell me of it; but up to the present I have never been wrong.' [17]

He stood on his dignity in his relations with the public also, and I cannot help thinking that part of his dissatisfaction with America on the first tour was due to the fact that he did not always feel he was receiving proper respect.[18] Nobody can pretend that the Americans did not give Dickens a magnificent reception in 1842, but the record of the tour places it quite beyond the pale of doubt that their homage

was often expressed in an exceedingly coarse and ill-mannered way. It was Dickens's first experience with Yankee cock-sureness and he felt quite within his rights in resenting it. For while he liked homage always, he never enjoyed being stared at as if he were a curiosity. In Cincinnati, for example, very little attention was paid to him, yet Cincinnati is one of the places treated best of all in the 'American Notes.' Dolby tells us that when Dickens went to the theater, he always disliked any references to himself and his books on the part of the actors. 'On such occasions it was amusing to watch Mr. Dickens's face. Immediately he became aware of what the mountebank . . . proposed, he would assume an air and expression of the utmost indifference and *ennui*: and his inattention and apparent deafness to the applause with which his name was greeted were usually a reproof that the clown and public invariably accepted and he would be left to the enjoyment of the remainder of the entertainment, secure from future annoyance.' [19] Well, in America they went much farther than rudely calling attention to his presence in a theater: on one occasion they even spied on him in his bedchamber! And when he wrote 'Martin Chuzzlewit' he had his revenge.

Much later, when Dickens went to America again, the storm of mutual recriminations had long blown itself into history, and on that occasion, he must be admitted to have done his best to undo the harm that had been done before. Himself he described his mission — not too modestly —as that of trying 'to lay down a third cable of intercommunication and alliance between the old world and the new,' and — to a degree at least — he may be said to have accomplished just this. There was little friction on that trip: perhaps

Dickens had learned more of tolerance; perhaps it was simply that he was too ill to be very aggressive. America, too, had come at least a step or two closer to civilization. His farewell speech in New York, before finally returning to England, was a public admission that his earlier strictures had been too severe, and it is still reprinted, in accordance with his request, at the close of both 'Martin Chuzzlewit' and the 'American Notes.' 'Nor am I, believe me, so arrogant as to suppose that in five-and-twenty years there have been no changes in me, and that I had nothing to learn and no extreme impressions to correct when I was here first.' [20] The Not-Me is encroaching a little on the Me: they are adjusting themselves to live in closer harmony together. On the whole, it must be said of the Americans, that, though they behaved pretty badly on the first journey, there was something of nobility in the way they forgave Dickens for his harsh words about them when he returned in 1868. And as for himself, the real honesty and manhood of him never showed more attractively than in this glad readiness to make amends.

II

It is to the Not-Me that we are now ready to turn.

As we might have expected, much of the same spirit is carried over. Sometimes, to be sure, we find a very large heart which beats only for its possessor, but Dickens's was not that kind of a heart. If his emotions were easily roused by his personal concerns, they were touched by the trials of others as well. In the abstract he loved humanity and thought kindly of it, liked to think well of it, felt that those who sneered at it and distrusted it were, like Ralph Nick-

leby, simply generalizing on the basis of some very poor specimens incarnate in themselves.[21] When he is in doubt, he always prefers a generous interpretation of unknown motives to a harsh one. How fine is his plea for 'The Lost Arctic Voyagers,' his insistence that the terrible accusation of cannibalism must not be made until and unless the thing should be absolutely proved. Indeed, he believed that evil could not succeed in the long run; that however triumphant it might seem to be for a time, in the end it would always overreach itself. 'There are dark shadows on the earth,' he admits, 'but its lights are stronger in the contrast.'[22] And there is the delightful story of that little clash at a dinner party where a bilious young man was denouncing the human race. 'I say' — said Dickens, leaning confidentially across the table — 'what a lucky thing it is you and I don't belong to it?'[23]

So the thought of humanity, the sight of humanity was pleasant to him. He liked the human face, the human voice, the human handclasp. At his readings, 'Through a hole in the curtain at the side, or through a chink in the screen upon the platform, he would eagerly direct your attention to what never palled upon his own, namely, the effect of the suddenly brightened sea of faces on the turning up of the gas, immediately before the moment of his own appearance at the reading-desk.'[24] Reformer though he was, Dickens was never a reformer in the sense in which Bernard Shaw is a reformer: that is, he was never so absorbed in his ideal of what he wanted men to be that he became impatient of their foibles and idiosyncrasies as they are. He was just English enough to enjoy 'muddling through,' and it seemed to him that, life being what it is, there were many tight

places where only muddling would serve. This comes out nowhere better than in 'Mugby Junction,' where Barbox Brothers and Lamps are discussing the infirmities of Lamps's deceased wife. Barbox Brothers has just said that she ought not to have married, knowing as she did that she was subject to fits. 'Well, sir!' replies Lamps, 'You see, Phœbe and me, we have talked that over too. And Lord bless us! Such a number on us has our infirmities, what with fits, and what with misfits, of one sort and another, that if we confessed to 'em all before we got married, most of us might never get married.' [25] And in the Lirriper stories, the lovable nature of both Mrs. Lirriper and the Major is emphasized, in spite of their peculiarities. Both might easily have been satirized. Dickens seems here quite sure of himself and of his effects. Introducing Mrs. Lirriper, he is not afraid to emphasize at the outset her unattractive qualities — her ignorance, her touchiness, her jealousy. As for the Major, he fails to pay his bills and absurdly overestimates himself, yet he, too, is presented as essentially lovable. Dickens realized that human beings cannot always live on the heights, and if the creature was good at heart, he was not disposed to worry too much about matters not absolutely fundamental.

Concretely, human beings moved him even more than they did in the abstract. A sick child whom he saw once haunted him for years,[26] and when he visited Longfellow at Cambridge, he was so oppressed by the thought that this was the house in which Mrs. Longfellow had been burned to death that he could find almost nothing to say.[27] Even those he did not know moved him powerfully. In 1840, he was juryman at an inquest where a mother was charged with having murdered her baby. So pitiful did the case seem to

him that he became ill. Furthermore, he himself caused counsel to be retained for the woman when she was tried at the Old Bailey, and as a result, a lenient sentence was obtained.[28] Habitually he tended to emphasize, not the things that divide men, but those that unite them — even when some are good and others bad, even when some are wise and others lacking even the gift of reason. In 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices,' there is a picture of a madman poring over a carpet. Dickens's amazing comment is thoroughly characteristic of him: 'Then, I thought how all of us, God help us! in our different ways are poring over our bits of matting, blindly enough, and what confusions and mysteries we make in the pattern.' [29]

And when he felt emotion, he was never ashamed to express it frankly. 'Heaven knows,' says Pip, 'we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts.' [30] Dickens's own susceptibility in this direction seems to have been almost feminine. 'I have been so happy in all this,' he writes Bulwer, 'that I could have cried on the shortest notice any time since Tuesday.' [31] Often he did. Moncure D. Conway tells of the wild enthusiasm at a banquet given in his honor before he sailed for America. 'When the storm of enthusiasm had quieted, Dickens tried to speak but could not; the tears streamed down his face. As he stood there looking on us in silence, colour and pallor alternating on his face, sympathetic emotion passed through the hall. When he presently began to say something, though still faltering, we gave our cheers but felt that the real eloquence of the evening had reached its climax.' [32]

Not only life moved him, but the reflection of life in art

as well. He wept over books — himself he tells us that Browning's 'A Blot in the 'Scutcheon' threw him into a perfect paroxysm of sorrow. He wept over plays and operas — Pauline Viardot says that when he was introduced to her during a performance of 'Orphée,' he was 'raining tears.' [33] Sometimes he even wept over manuscripts. 'I have been so very much affected by the long story without a title — which I have read this morning — that I am scarcely fit for a business letter.' [34] And I have already told in another connection how deeply he was moved by his own work. One illustration must serve here. 'When my father was arranging and rehearsing his readings from "Dombey,"' writes Mamie Dickens, 'the death of "little Paul" caused him such real anguish, the reading became so difficult to him, that he told us he could only master his intense emotion by keeping the picture of Plorn,* well, strong, and hearty, steadily before his eyes.' [35]

The past never failed to awaken tender, mournful sentiments for Dickens. As he once wrote Mrs. Winter, 'it is impossible to be spoken to out of the old times without a softened emotion.' [36] He thought of his youth in the tender, reminiscent mood of the reawakening Scrooge in 'A Christmas Carol.' 'David Copperfield' was his favorite book precisely because it recalled that past as no other book did. Sometimes, of course, when the past came back, he was disappointed in it. In his youth he had loved Bishop's 'The Miller and his Men,' and he cherished the thought of it always. Later it was revived, and of course he looked forward to the renewing of old experiences. Unfortunately, it was a bad performance: perhaps also something had faded out of

* His youngest child, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens.

the play. Dickens endured it until the second act, then he 'arose slowly and sadly, and said, "he could stand it no longer."' [37] This fond, sad clinging to the things of the past was always profoundly characteristic of him. 'In this brief life of ours, it is sad to do almost anything for the last time.' [38]

Dickens's sense of humanity is manifested again in his emotional democracy. This shows itself, first, negatively, in the dislike of 'society (as the phrase is)' [39] that runs all through his writings. Sometimes it reaches almost a savage intensity: 'I declare I never go into what is called "society" that I am not aweary of it, despise it, hate it, and reject it. The more I see of its extraordinary conceit, and its stupendous ignorance of what is passing out of doors, the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when, being incapable of reforming itself, it will have to submit to be reformed by others off the face of the earth.' [40] Sometimes he contents himself with mere sarcasm, as when he speaks of 'such as are not made of the dust of the earth, but of some superior article for the present unknown.' [41] Even his most kindly utterance on society is, however, no more favorable than this: 'There is much good in it; there are many good and true people in it; it has its appointed place. But the evil of it is, that it is a world wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun.' [42]

He hits the vagaries of society and those who practice them every chance he gets. Pride of family and position seemed merely ridiculous to him, as it always does to 'self-made' men. Himself he was never at home in formal social

gatherings, and Forster tells us that 'He would take as much pains to keep out of the houses of the great as others take to get into them.' [43] The meanest thing he can think of to say of Fanny Squeers is that she was 'quite lazy enough (and sufficiently vain and frivolous withal) to have been a fine lady . . .' [44] He did not find that high society fostered good manners: 'May not the complaint that common people are above their station, often take its rise in the fact of UNcommon people being below theirs?' [45] And as for efficiency and public service: '. . . I have such a very small opinion of what the great genteel have done for us, that I am very philosophical indeed concerning what the great vulgar may do, having a decided opinion that they can't do worse.' [46]

This much is negative. Positively, there is much more evidence. Once at a dinner at Augustus Egg's, he actually wanted the cook called in to receive a vote of thanks.[47] When Fechter sent him the Swiss chalet, a carpenter came down to Gadshill from the Lyceum Theater, where Fechter was playing, to set it up. Night came and the job was not done. So Dickens invited the carpenter to spend the night at the house. 'The family pointed out that their annual New Year's dinner was to take place that night, and that several noblemen and persons of distinction in the country had been invited to it. "Never mind," said Dickens, "I can find him a suit of evening clothes, and I dare say he will look as well as any one else. How can I, when M. Godin has come down as an act of friendship to me, let him go to the 'Falstaff' to sleep?"' [48]

He had the rather unusual power of considering the problems of the less fortunate members of society from their own point of view, and this often led him to aspects of the

truth which others had passed over, as when he scorned the aristocratic view that a little education is dangerous and worse than no education at all.[49] He believed, contrariwise, in 'the just right of every man, whatever his belief, or however humble his degree, to aspire, and to have some means of aspiring, to be a better and a wiser man.'[50] Thus Macaulay's sneering at the clerks and milliners who are thrilled by Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine seemed to him mere snobbishness.[51] Where his own works were concerned, he always tried to give the poor man an equal chance, as when, in arranging his readings, he insisted on some good seats being sold for a shilling in order to accommodate those who could not pay more.

Toward this emotional democracy, as I have called it, Dickens was led, too, by the steadfast conviction which always seems to me so eminently characteristic of him — that human life on its ordinary, everyday level, is important, is significant, is worth while. We are all of us more or less under the delusion that life as we know it from day to day is not of any special significance, and that it gains its glory only from exceptional moments, when we soar into the Empyrean through some extraordinary experience, and seem to escape for the time from the prison of ordinary humdrum concerns and dismal, tiring duties. Dickens can hardly be said to have shared this feeling. He was not insensitive to heroism. But what interested him always was that which is common to all men, and it was the little sacrifices that men — or, more usually, women — make from day to day as they go about their business in the world that always called forth his warmest admiration. In these things it seemed to him there was an inspiration equal to the inspiration of the artist.

Says the narrator of 'The Haunted House': 'I will not say that everything was utterly commonplace, because I doubt if anything can be that, except to utterly commonplace people.' [52]

III

But Dickens's sympathy went deeper than sentiment and kindly feeling. For he possessed one of the pioneer social consciences of Great Britain. Not only was he more profoundly moved than most of his contemporaries by the sense that there were unhappy outcasts in society, but — and this is far more significant — he had a much keener sense than many of them that society was responsible for her outcasts and under obligation to bring them back to the right way. 'Of what avail is it to send missionaries to the miserable man condemned to work in a fœtid court, with every sense bestowed upon him for his health and happiness turned into a torment, with every month of his life adding to the heap of evils under which he is condemned to exist.' [53] Numerous examples of his social sensitiveness might be cited, but the most striking of all occurs in 'The Chimes.'

The startling thing about 'The Chimes' is that here in 1844 we find Dickens asserting without compromise that prostitution, drunkenness, murder, arson, and revolution come into the world, not because prostitutes, murderers, drunkards, and others of their stamp are by nature viler than other human beings, and certainly not because they love darkness better than light, but simply because our social order is so constituted that some members of it never do get a fair chance to understand what real decency is. As I shall show in a moment, Dickens does not attempt to excuse

all his criminals in this way: nevertheless, this is unmistakably the teaching of 'The Chimes.' Lilian becomes a prostitute because her soul is crushed by unrewarded toil; Richard, frightened away from marriage and domestic happiness by his poverty, sinks lower and lower into drunkenness and sloth until at last he revenges himself upon his betters as a revolutionary firebrand; Meg slays her child to obviate the possibility that she may live to follow in Lilian's footsteps. And in every case, says Dickens, it is Society, and not these poor outcasts, that is to blame.

It was, as I suggest, startling beyond belief in 1844, so startling that probably not very many people understood all its implications. If they had, it is inconceivable that the matter should have passed off so quietly. For here, on a broader scale, Dickens lays down precisely the same principle which George Bernard Shaw was to enunciate with regard to prostitution at the turn of the century: 'The play ['Mrs. Warren's Profession'] is, simply, a study in prostitution, and its aim is to show that prostitution is not the prostitute's fault, but the fault of a society which pays for a poor and pretty woman's prostitution in solid gold, and pays for her honesty with starvation, drudgery, and pious twaddle.'

I need surely not enlarge here on the consternation with which Mr. Shaw's play was greeted well into the twentieth century. In some portions of the United States, the distress expressed itself even in police prosecution. Even William Winter, then dean of American dramatic critics, saw, or fancied he saw, in this play and in others like it, the overturning of everything that was pure in the theater. And what was shocking in Winter's day must, I should think, have been immensely more shocking in 1844.

This point of view is not confined to 'The Chimes' alone. There was, to be sure, a great deal in the poor — even as England had created them — that Dickens admired. 'What the poor are to the poor is little known, excepting to themselves and God.' [54] Yet for all their freedom from the spoiled and querulous vices that prosperity brings to petty souls, he knew full well that the best argument against poverty was not that it is uncomfortable, but that it stifles the highest impulses of the soul. 'Cant as we may, and as we shall to the end of all things, it is very much harder for the poor to be virtuous than it is for the rich; and the good that is in them, shines the brighter for it.' [55] Only he recognized frankly that it does not always shine, that in many cases vice is predetermined and the individual himself has absolutely nothing to say about it. And in such cases he never scrupled to lay the blame where it belonged — not on the helpless victim (already sufficiently punished in the mere circumstance of his degradation), but rather at the door of a complacent society.

Yet, in spite of all his pronounced social interests, Dickens was bitterly opposed to the social sciences. More than once he speaks of 'the gentle, politico-economical principle that a surplus population must and ought to starve.' [56] Continually he ridicules the practice of studying averages, and in Mr. Filer of 'The Chimes,' the whole politico-economic attitude — as embodied in the teachings of John Stuart Mill and others — is mercilessly caricatured.[57]

To be sure, when Dickens is really forced into a corner on this matter — as he was in 1854, when Charles Knight sent him a copy of his new book, at the same time expressing his fear that Dickens would condemn him as a political econo-

mist — he will explain that he renounces only the vagaries of political science: 'My satire is against those who see figures and averages, and nothing else — the representatives of the wickedest and most enormous vice of this time — the men who, through long years to come, will do more to damage the really useful truths of political economy than I could do (if I tried) in my whole life; the addled heads who would take the average of cold in the Crimea during twelve months as a reason for clothing a soldier in nankeens on a night when he would be frozen to death in fur, and who would comfort the labourer in travelling twelve miles a day to and from his work, by telling him that the average distance of one inhabited place to another in the whole area of England, is not more than four miles.' [58] As a matter of fact, however, his objection went much deeper than that. Dr. Samuel McChord Crothers has somewhere suggested that 'There is no tyranny so cruel as that which would result were we to allow the philosophers to rule us. For the philosopher is concerned with general laws, and is intolerant of exceptions, whereas it is the province of mercy to treat each case as, in a sense, an exception. . . . We should look back with envy to the good old days of Nero and Tamerlane.' Here, I think, is the real reason why Dickens was opposed to political economy. Whenever the general law comes into conflict with the individual case, he is all for the individual case. He thought of the political economist as living, like Mr. Gradgrind, in the seclusion of his study, settling questions on paper, and quite out of touch with 'the teeming myriads of human beings around him.' [59] Such detachment seemed to him necessarily to imply coldness or indifference: he could not feel that those who drew themselves far enough away from the poor to con-

sider them dispassionately as a 'problem' were ever likely to make any contribution towards the solution of that 'problem.' In order to do that, you needed, first of all, love. 'I believe . . . that into the relations between employers and employed, as into all the relations of this life, there must enter something of feeling and sentiment; something of mutual explanation, forbearance, and consideration; something which is not to be found in Mr. McCulloch's dictionary, and is not exactly stateable in figures; otherwise those relations are wrong and rotten at the core and will never bear sound fruit.' [60]

The strength and the weakness of Dickens's attitude in this matter are, I take it, both fairly obvious. He fought on the losing side, for we of the modern world are coming increasingly under the domination of the specialist along all lines, and of that process there seems to be no end in sight. Doubtless we have lost as well as gained in this, and it may be that Dickens foresaw the losses more than the gains, and tried to cling fast to some of the things that are even now slipping farther away from us. This much at least is clear: that the sympathetic nature of Dickens could never have satisfied itself in some research which should *ultimately* relieve human misery. He had not sufficient vision, or sufficient patience, or sufficient coldness to achieve that. As he saw the situation, it was always acute, and immediate remedies were demanded. There was no time to stop to collect data; while you were comfortably collecting, the victim might starve to death. Consequently the somewhat naïve assumption which, there is no denying, runs all through Dickens's writing on social questions — the feeling that good-will is all that is necessary to solve the problems that

face human society; if you only have love, ways and means will take care of themselves. Well, if you are able to take that attitude, what place can there be left for the specialist in any field? 'For such is the rash boldness of the uninitiated, that they will frequently set up some monstrous abstract principle, such as humanity, or tenderness, or the like idle folly, in obstinate defiance of all precedent and usage; and will even venture to maintain the same against the persons who have made the precedents and established the usage, and who must therefore be the best and most impartial judges of the subject.'[61] It is perfectly possible to sympathize to the fullest extent with Dickens's conviction that no human problems can be settled without love, and still to feel that, in some cases, a certain amount of technical equipment is necessary for any judgment of value.

IV

We may then regard it as established at this point that Dickens's attitude toward humanity was kindly, sympathetic, and loving. This brings up the whole much-mooted question of his sentimentality.

Carlyle said of Dickens that 'His theory of life was entirely wrong. He thought men ought to be buttered up, and the world made soft and accommodating for them, and all sorts of fellows have turkey for their Christmas dinner. Commanding and controlling and punishing them he would give up without any misgivings in order to coax and soothe and delude them into doing right.'[62] Certain passages in Dickens's life do seem to lend color to Carlyle's charges. Thus Marcus Stone tells us he was once abominably robbed by a man who had worked for him. Instead of prosecuting

the criminal, Dickens set him up in business. When remonstrated with, he replied, 'Poor fellow, he has lost his character, and will not be able to get another situation.' [63]

There is, however, considerable evidence on the other side. Though he did believe that in human nature the good predominates over the bad, still he knew the difference between the two, and he never blinked the bad when he saw it or attempted to pretend that it wasn't there. In 'Great Expectations' he speaks bitterly of 'that bad habit of living, so highly desirable to be got rid of by some people.' [64] Among his own characters he differentiates clearly. Only the grave will cure Mrs. Skewton of her affectations.[65] Tom Gradgrind is definitely outside the pale: it would be better if he were dead.[66] The treatment of the criminals in 'Oliver Twist' is a very interesting study from this point of view. Nancy, of course, exemplifies the soul of goodness in things evil. Charley Bates, too, turns against Sikes in the end and ultimately straightens his way. But certainly no such plea or anything approaching it can be made for either Fagin or Bill Sikes himself, nor for Jonas in 'Martin Chuzzlewit.' They suffer in the end, it is true, but they suffer from fear, not from remorse.

Dickens believed that the Fagins and the Chuzzlewits exist in life as well as in his novels: indeed, he wrote 'Oliver Twist' partly because he wanted to strip from the criminal some of the glamour with which popular novelists had invested him. He always fought the tendency to allow criminals to pose as heroes, and he consistently opposed capital punishment because it martyrizes the criminal.[67] He felt that criminals were frequently without conscience altogether, that often they struggle toward crime as diligently as

decent people struggle away from it.[68] He knew, too, that many prisoners cannot be reformed: if you would save them, you must begin farther back, before ever they turn to crime.[69] There is nothing in literature more definitely unsentimental than what the Châlons landlady says in 'Little Dorrit' of those 'people (men and women both, unfortunately) who have no good in them — none.' She believes 'That there are people whom it is necessary to detest without compromise. That there are people who must be dealt with as enemies of the human race. That there are people who have no human heart, and who must be crushed like savage beasts and cleared out of the way.'[70]

We may recur here to 'The Chimes' for an illustration which goes to show that, in his treatment of character, Dickens could be quite free from sentimentality when he wanted to be. This is the case of Richard. Readers of 'The Chimes' will remember that in Toby's terrible dream, Meg and Richard, at first frightened away from marriage by their poverty and the dire predictions of Mr. Filer, do finally marry, but that they marry too late. Mrs. Chickenstalker explains the situation to Tugby at the beginning of the Fourth Quarter: 'He went on better for a short time: but, as his habits were too old and strong to be got rid of; he soon fell back a little; and was falling fast back, when his illness came so strong upon him.' And even as she speaks, the word comes that Richard has passed away.

Now if there is anything characteristic of the sentimentalist in fiction, it is his naïve belief that good resolutions can effect anything. It is notable, and it should be considered in the discussion of Dickens's sentimentality, that here — as also in the more famous case of Sydney Carton — they

accomplish precisely nothing. As irrevocably as any determinist to-day, Dickens says, It is too late. The die is cast. Richard must perish.

Through Richard also, Dickens warned England of the danger of revolution, or — it would be more accurate to say — he pointed out that revolution was inevitable unless the conditions which invite it were to be remedied. This note he frequently and insistently sounded. It has hardly a sentimental ring. Look at it, for example, at the close of 'A Tale of Two Cities': 'Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine. All the devouring and insatiate Monsters imagined since imagination could record itself, are fused in the one realization, Guillotine. And yet there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a spring, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms. Sow the same seed of rapacious license and oppression over again, and it will surely yield the same fruit according to its kind.' [71]

And 'A Christmas Carol' brings the same thing closer home. The scene is at the close of Stave Three, where Scrooge sees the vision of the wolfish boy and girl:

'"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

'"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. "And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written which is Doom, unless the

writing be erased. Deny it!" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand toward the city. "Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your own factious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!"' [72]

In private life, too, it is clear that Dickens believed in the strict enforcement of the law, even when it was not entirely comfortable for certain people. He was a consistent advocate of severer punishments for all professional thieves and criminals, feeling that sympathy for the enemies of society was never of any great assistance to the decent members of the social body. Twice he writes Wills concerning individual offenders, neither time in a sentimental mood. In the first letter he is speaking of a drunken woman who has given him much trouble: 'I find that she has been perpetually drunk ever since they have been to Kentish Town. I hope to deposit her (with the Lord's help) in Kentish Town Station House yet!' [73] Again he writes: 'It is much to be regretted that we could not take —— to Bow Street. In the case of so nefarious an offence there really is a duty to be done to Society — though I am almost afraid to use the phrase: it is so horribly abused.' [74] Nor does he seem to have neglected his own rights and the duty of looking after them. 'Many thanks for the Ouvry and Farrer report. It will not do to bear this kind of insolence, as a consequence of a perfectly independent and moderate piece of criticism. He must apologize in the papers, or we positively must go on with our action for libel.' [75] Many readers will recall also the Uncommercial Traveller's account of how he once took the trouble to have a girl arrested for using bad language in the streets.

Dickens always tried his best not to allow personal par-

tialities to becloud his judgment on a moral issue. In his novels it is only good-for-nothings like Henry Gowan who feel that 'there is much less difference than you are inclined to suppose between an honest man and a scoundrel.' [76] In his life, as T. A. Trollope observed, he had a large capacity for moral indignation. 'Men and their actions were not all much of a muchness to him. . . . Dickens hated a mean action or a mean sentiment as one hates something that is physically loathsome to the sight and touch. And he could be angry, as those with whom he had been angry did not very readily forget.' [77] He met one test in his own family. In 1868, Augustus Dickens, once his favorite brother, was living in Chicago with a woman who was not his wife. When Dickens cancelled his Chicago reading, the press insinuated that he did not wish to visit a city in which his brother was living in poverty. Dickens immediately replied that he was even then contributing to the support of the only genuine Mrs. Augustus Dickens, who was living in England.[78]

Nor did he confine his frankness to moral and criminal matters. He seems to have been equally honest in his editorial work. Many writers have borne testimony to his kindness in making rejections, but he always felt keenly that it was a heavy responsibility to encourage anybody to write who was not possessed of real talent, and it is hard to see how any advice could be franker than that which Dickens sent to Henry Kolle after reading some pieces which had been written by Kolle's daughter: 'As a composition of a young lady in private life they are interesting and meritorious. . . . Judging her solely by their internal evidence, I find her on a level with hundreds and thousands of unheard-of amateurs.' [79]

That all these elements were present in Dickens at all times in a perfectly balanced synthesis, it would be absurd to maintain. Like most of us, he had a hard streak in him as well as a soft one, and sometimes one predominated, sometimes the other. But he was by no means the mawkish individual which those who have formed their estimate of him by exclusive reference to his description of the death of Little Nell would have us believe. What he was, quite steadily, and in spite of all passing vagaries, was a great-hearted, generous man who was sensitive, not only to the sufferings of his fellows, but to their charm as well. 'You have the wisdom of Love,' says the Minor Canon to Helena in 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood,' 'and it was the highest wisdom ever known upon this earth, remember.' [80]

CHAPTER V

FIVE TESTS OF CHARACTER

I

THE first test is his use of money. Purely external, perhaps, but is there anything that reveals more of a man?

Dickens's attitude toward money had no hint of cant or of quixoticism about it. He had suffered enough from want in his early years to learn the value of money, and later, when he was in a position to earn large sums with his pen, he never pretended an indifference that he did not feel. 'Good literature,' he told Miss Constance Cross, 'will always command its price.' [1] From time to time, he heard his brethren of the ivory tower complaining that the nineteenth century had commercialized literature. He was never very much impressed by that complaint. He remembered that only this same commercialization had saved authors from the disgrace of patronage, and that alone seemed to him a very great achievement. Himself he squeezed the business of writing from every possible angle. His brief and disastrous attempt to edit a daily newspaper, his early experiment with the miscellany, 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' the later, very successful periodicals, 'Household Words' and 'All the Year Round' — altogether they speak with the same voice. His disputes with various publishers, his unswerving opposition to unauthorized (and therefore personally unprofitable) dramatizations of his novels, his great interest in the question of international copyright, his numerous readings from his own works — one and all they show that he was not averse to money-making.

Of course there were mixed motives in all these cases. Take the readings, for example. I have explained elsewhere why I believe that, although Dickens himself was firmly persuaded that he undertook this work simply in order to earn some sorely needed money, his abiding love of the stage was, after all, more fundamentally at the bottom of the exhibition. And certainly the adaptations of his novels which various hack-writers dumped upon the stage were, nearly all of them, disgracefully bad, definite misrepresentations against which any self-respecting author must have protested. But Mr. Van Amerongen and others have shown clearly that in this case the commercial motive was paramount.[2] Dickens's artistic conscience troubled him much less when he derived some profit from a dramatization than when he did not. In the case of the copyright agitation, the desire for personal gain was much less consciously a leading motive. Here he was a crusader enlisted in a cause in which he believed with his whole heart, a warrior for justice, not only for himself, but for the whole profession of letters, its honor and its dignity. Thus he writes Forster of the speech he delivered on this subject at Hartford, Connecticut: 'I wish you could have heard how I gave it out. My blood so boiled as I thought of the monstrous injustice that I felt as if I were twelve feet high when I thrust it down their throats.'[3]

In connection with the Christmas books, there are two very interesting illustrations of Dickens's feeling concerning the profits accruing from his works, and they are rather amusing illustrations, too, the desire for gain blending in them, in a most entertaining way, with other and higher considerations. 'A Christmas Carol' was published in 1843 in a

very handsome format, and Dickens confidently expected large profits from it. 'I knew I meant a good thing . . .' he wrote to Mitton. 'I am sure it will do me a great deal of good; and I hope it will sell well.'[4] The 'Carol' did sell well, but the costs of production had not been carefully enough calculated, and Dickens was cruelly disappointed in the returns. 'Such a night as I have passed! I really believed I should never get up again, until I had passed through the horrors of a fever. . . . The first six thousand copies show a profit of £230! And the last will yield as much more. I had set my heart and soul upon a Thousand, clear.'[5] Charles Dickens the younger believed that disappointment over the 'Carol' profits was one of the reasons why his father broke with Chapman and Hall.[6] The other interesting example of strangely balanced motives comes from 1847, when Dickens, absorbed in 'Dombey,' is in some doubt as to his ability to get a Christmas book ready for that season. 'I am very loath to lose the money,' he writes Forster. 'And still more so to leave any gap at Christmas firesides which I ought to fill.'[7]

But money never interested Dickens for its own sake. 'No man,' he said, 'attaches less importance to the possession of money, or less disparagement to the want of it, than I do.'[8] There are a thousand things in his life to bear him out. 'For myself, I would rather that my children, coming after me, trudged in the mud, and knew by the general feeling of society that their father was beloved, and had been of some use, than I would have them ride in their carriages, and know by their banker's books that he was rich.'[9] The danger of wealth is often illustrated in Dickens's writings. In its mildest form it appears in Mrs. Boffin's saying,

'We have come into a great fortune, and we must do what's right by our fortune; we must act up to it.' [10] At its worst it induces greed and cruelty and selfishness, as in Ralph Nickleby and Jonas Chuzzlewit. 'Why money should be so precious to an Ass too dull and mean to exchange it for any other satisfaction is strange. . . .' [11] It should be said also that, though Dickens wanted money and a good deal of it, he was always careful to scrutinize the sources from which it came. After the death of Ralph Nickleby, Nicholas and his family refuse to touch the old man's tainted money. 'And the riches for which he had toiled all his days, and burdened his soul with so many evil deeds, were swept at last into the coffers of the state, and no man was the better or the happier for them.' [12] Dickens himself might have been capable of that. Did he not resign the editorship of the 'Daily News,' at a sacrifice of two thousand pounds yearly, because he was not given a free hand in the conduct of the journal? [13]

Of the science of money, Dickens knew little. In the early days, Mr. Houghton, the American publisher, who, in the absence of international copyright, had been bringing out Dickens's books in America without paying royalties on them, once voluntarily offered him a draft. Dickens sat studying him, apparently afraid of a trap. Finally he said he could accept nothing without consulting his solicitor. A few days later, when Houghton returned to learn his decision, he refused to accept the draft, saying he did not understand American money and wanted nothing to do with it.[14] In 1837, Carey and Company, of Philadelphia, voluntarily sent him two hundred and fifty pounds for 'Pickwick.' Dickens returned it and asked simply for a copy of the American edition.[15]

Modern commercialism and industrialism, as we know them to-day, were just beginning to take form in Dickens's time, and he was not blind to the dangers of either one of them. The tendency to test life by material values was one of the objectionable things he noticed in America on his first visit here,[16] as foreigners have always been inclined to notice it. But he never imagined that his own country was free from kindred vices. Commercial solidity and greed, hiding itself under the blanket of religious pretension, is hit as early as 'Pickwick,'[17] and in 'Nickleby' we have the elaborate satire of the great Muffin Company — a picture of big business masquerading as benevolence. Mr. Merdle in 'Little Dorrit' is a merciless portrait of a conscienceless financier, not the least effective feature of which is the bitter satire of those who honor Merdle simply because he has money, and in spite of the fact that his money has never done any good to anybody. Finally in this connection, Blanchard Jerrold was brave enough to preserve the following description by Dickens of a typical gathering of big business men in London. Nothing more vitriolic is coming from Mr. Sinclair Lewis's pen to-day: 'O heaven! if you could have been with me at the hospital dinner last Monday. There were men there — your city aristocracy — who made such speeches, and expressed such sentiments, as any moderately intelligent dustman would have blushed through his cindery bloom to have thought of. Sleek, slobbering, bow-paunched, over-fed, apoplectic, snorting cattle — and the auditory leaping up in their delight! I never saw such an illustration of the power of purse, or felt so degraded and debased by its contemplation, since I have had eyes and ears. The absurdity of the thing was too horrible to laugh at. It was perfectly overwhelming.'[18]

Now money, as we all know, travels in two directions — in and out. We have seen Dickens's feeling about the money that came in. What, now, of his disbursements?

His generosity is nothing short of splendid. I find little extravagance where personal expenditures are concerned, but with others his munificence is often almost prodigal. First of all, he had a very large family to provide for — or, more accurately, two large families, for neither the family into which he was born, nor the one which, through marriage, he established, was at all bashful in laying claims upon him. He took his responsibilities in this connection very seriously, conscientiously thought of them and studied them — frequently worried over them. Beyond question, one of the reasons why he wanted to make money and a lot of money was in order that he might be able to fulfill his obligations to his dependents. That he did fulfill them, that he more than fulfilled them, admits of no doubt whatever.

As an editor, his generosity is sometimes foolish. His usual rate of payment was a guinea a page,[19] 'which was ample,' says John Hollingshead, 'but not sentimentally liberal,' whereupon he goes on to tell how, after an article of his had been accepted and proofed by Dickens, but never printed, he took it to Norman Macleod, who printed it in 'Good Words' and paid double the Dickens rate.[20] Frequently Dickens seems to have paid for contributions that he did not use, and he allowed his regular and favorite contributors to get into the bad habit of drawing in advance. G. A. Sala was a great sinner in this respect. Once, when Sala found himself seventy pounds in Dickens's debt, the novelist 'laughingly suggested that a sponge should be applied to the slate, and that then "we could begin again" quite comfortably.' [21]

It sometimes seems, however, as if Dickens's charity were most amazingly manifested toward those who had no claim upon him of any kind whatever. Unlike many who weep over the sorrows of the poor, he did not satisfy himself with weeping: he gave, and he gave enormously. Let us look first at a few general testimonies, all coming from people who were in a position to know the facts. One says: 'He was a man of practical charity, and gave large sums judiciously every year. Indeed, he would get up in the night and go ten miles to aid any one who was suffering.' [22] Another speaks as follows: 'The munificent sacrifices he made of time, money, and sympathy to men of letters, to artists, to obscure persons who had not the shadow of a shade of a claim upon him, will never be summed up. There are thousands of persons living who could bear grateful testimony to this boundless generosity of his nature.' [23] Finally, Walter T. Spencer speaks to-day of the immense store of manuscript letters in his possession: 'But the more letters I turn over, the more ready am I to declare that no man in history has shown greater tenderness or consideration for those who, by the grace of God, walked in the paths of lesser or iller fortune.' [24]

It goes without saying that, not having Fortunatus's purse, Dickens could not honor all the requests that came to him. It is said that the begging letter-writers had his name high on their list of likely givers. Often he was annoyed by them, inevitably. Sometimes he denounced them in print, and certain of Boffin's experiences with them in 'Our Mutual Friend' are simply transcripts of his own. But where he felt there was real need, he gave. Even while he was abroad, begging-letters were forwarded to him, and it is said that this reply became almost a formula: 'Go to the address and

inquire into the case. If the statement be true, give the enclosed cheque for £5.'[25]

But let us glance at a few of the many specific instances that have been recorded, as reflecting rather more closely and definitely than these generalizations can, the spirit of Dickens's charity. One of the best-known is the story told by Sheridan Knowles of Dickens's generosity to Haydn, the author of the 'Dictionary of Dates.' As soon as he learned of Haydn's poverty, Dickens went to him personally with relief. Then, not content with what he could do alone, he laid the case before the Literary Society.[26] Similarly, when Tyrone Power, the actor, died in a steamboat accident in 1841, leaving his wife and family destitute, Dickens at once contributed one hundred pounds of his own money, and then constituted himself a committee of one until sufficient funds had been raised to put the family on its feet.[27] When he was in America in 1868, the 'Boston Transcript' recorded a donation of one thousand dollars to Edgar Allan Poe's mother-in-law, Mrs. Clemm.[28] After the failure of the publisher Macrone, Dickens edited the 'Pic-Nic Papers' for the benefit of his family, which is all the more to his credit, as he and Macrone were not on good terms.[29]

But we will let Blanchard Jerrold tell the climax of this gracious story: 'A very dear friend of mine, and of many others to whom literature is a staff, had died. To say that his family had claims upon Charles Dickens is to say that they were promptly acknowledged, and satisfied with the grace and heartiness which double the gift, sweeten the bread, and warm the wine. I asked one connection of our dear friend whether he had seen the poor wife and children. "Seen them!" he answered, "I was there to-day. They are removed

into a charming cottage: they have everything about them: and just think of this! when I burst into one of the parlours in my eager survey of the new house, I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves, up some steps, hammering away lustily. He turned: it was Charles Dickens, and he was hanging the pictures for the widow."' [30]

II

If there is any absolute test of a man's character, or any test approaching the absolute, it is his attitude toward children. 'Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.' Dickens himself used this test in judging others, and we may be quite sure he would be willing to have it applied to him. Certainly there is no other from which he is more likely to emerge triumphantly. 'The simplest and most affecting passage in all the noble history of our Great Master,' he writes, 'is his consideration for little children.' [31] Himself he was never quite able to credit any man who told him he did not care for children. Such a heart would really be 'quite an unsafe monstrosity among men.' [32]

Dickens had by nature an instinctive sympathy with youth and the youthful point of view. He was always forward-looking rather than backward-looking; a prognosticator, not an antiquarian; fundamentally interested in what was going to be, not in what already had been. The evil Ralph Nickleby scorns Nicholas and dismisses him as a 'boy.' Dickens comments: 'This word is much used as a term of reproach by elderly gentlemen towards their juniors: probably with the view of deluding society into the belief

that if they could be young again, they wouldn't on any account.' [33] Like all who try to see things from the child's point of view, and who are interested in securing a natural, inevitable unfolding of his nature, Dickens was not over-enthusiastic in favor of discipline for children. At least he had no use for such discipline as he has represented for us in Mrs. Pipchin and in Mr. Willet, disciplinarians both much more interested in their own dignity and comfort than in the welfare of their charges. An overtrained child, perfectly behaved, seemed to him a terrible outrage against nature.[34] He realized that children have a certain dignity, felt that the sanctity of a child's personality deserves respect quite as much as does that of an adult, and that superior or condescending or ill-mannered liberties are quite as much out of place in the one case as in the other. '. . . the greater part of my observation of parents and children,' he wrote, 'has shown selfishness in the first, almost invariably.' [35] He believed, too, that all children have certain rights in the way of freedom and non-constraint, and sometimes he looked longingly at the gypsy children, rather envying them their lot, in contrast to the oft-hampered children of civilization.[36]

At its best, as I have perhaps already suggested, childhood had for Dickens a distinctly religious appeal. Something of God was bound up in a child, and right-minded people could not help but feel it, as the poor country folk feel it in Little Nell. To be sure, not all Dickens's children are like Little Nell, though it is sometimes carelessly assumed that they are. The child Polly in 'Mugby Junction,' for example, is distinctly of the pert variety. But pertness certainly was not what Dickens thought of first in connection with childhood. There is nothing in all his writing more touching than

the picture of Jemmy in 'Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy,' carrying the forgiveness of the unsoiled heart to his sinful father, dying, unrecognized, in the bed before him. Here Dickens touches in a most interesting way — I have no doubt, quite unconsciously — the Christian doctrine of the Office of the Keys. Only — and this is very significant — forgiveness is not invested in a Church, nor is it in any way connected with theological prerogatives: it is simply the natural affection of the pure in heart.

So much for the general: what now of the specific? One observer says: 'No one could have dined, or walked, or spent a day, or traveled on the railway, or casually met during a series of months or years with Dickens, without noticing the absorbing passion he had for children of all ages, boys and girls, babies and "toddling wee things," ragged ne'er-do-wells and petty pickpockets, and not have failed to mark the magnetic power by which he won their love.' [37] In 1869, James T. Fields went slumming with him in London. 'At the door of one of the penny lodging-houses (it was growing towards morning, and the raw air almost cut one to the bone), I saw him snatch a little child out of its poor drunken mother's arms, and bear it in, filthy as it was, that it might be warmed and cared for.' [38] And John Payne Collier tells the lovely story of having walked with Dickens once 'through Hungerford Market, where we followed a coal-heaver, who carried his little rosy but grimy child looking over his shoulder; and Charles Dickens bought a half-penny-worth of cherries, and, as we went along, he gave them one by one to the little fellow without the knowledge of his father.' [39] As for children in happier circumstances, his charming letter to Hastings Hughes [40] and his kindness to

Kate Douglas Wiggin are sufficient testimony to his friendly relations with them. 'I remember feeling,' wrote Mrs. Wiggin, 'that I had never known anybody so well and so intimately.' [41]

Nor did he stop with such sporadic and impulsive acts of sympathy. He was terribly sensitive to suffering in children, and in the very hour of the break-up of his own home, he threw himself into the work of establishing a children's hospital in London.[42] One of his sons told, many years afterward, how Dickens had once fed and educated a boy-sweep, a waif of the streets, afterward fitting him out for a decent and a successful life in New South Wales.[43] Doubtless it was only one of many charities, most of which will forever remain unrecorded. When the *Carol* was being staged on one occasion, it was proposed to bring Tiny Tim on the stage in his irons and bandages. 'No, Stirling, no,' said Dickens; 'this won't do! remember how painful it would be to many of the audience having crippled children' [44]

The child in Dickens himself was revealed on numerous occasions. Some of this has already appeared in what I have written of his various pranks. When he gave birthday parties for his children, he used to like to invite also 'some children of a larger growth,' [45] trusting always that they would be quite as ready as any of the children to join in the celebration. Charles Dickens the younger tells of one Christmas when he received a toy theater. Dickens and Clarkson Stanfield immediately set to work to produce 'The Elephant of Siam' in it, and not until the men had wearied of his toy did the boy get much of a chance to play with it.[46]

Taken by itself, that story might be thought to indicate

that Dickens was thoughtless or selfish in his relations with his own children. It can hardly be too strongly urged that he was nothing of the sort. This insistence is all the more necessary, it seems to me, since there are several passages in Dickens's letters which, taken by themselves, and taken seriously, might seem to indicate that he felt his children as a burden and sometimes regretted their presence. There was more than one time in his life when his love of fantastic exaggeration led to serious misunderstandings, and some of his utterances leave the way open for misunderstanding even to-day. The sense of the wonder of parenthood never deserted Dickens, and undoubtedly, as his family increased so rapidly, there were times when its growth seemed almost oppressive. 'I have laid down my pen and taken a long breath after writing this family history. I have also considered whether there are any more children, and I don't think there are. If I should remember two or three others presently, I will mention them in a postscript.' [47] Again, to Charles Lever: 'I am heartily sorry to learn that your boy has given you so much trouble. It is a tremendous weight and anxiety to be in our proud and venerable condition. Let me offer you one consolation out of the fulness of my heart — and quiver. You have not seven of them; I have!' [48] Again, 'I am here to send Walter away over what they call in Green Bush melodramas "the Big Drink," and I don't at all know this day how he comes to be mine, or I his.' [49] And in 1852, he writes M. De Cerjat: 'My wife is quite well again, after favoring me (I think I could have dispensed with the compliment) with No. 10.' [50] Finally, at a time when his expenses were particularly heavy: '... on the whole, I am inclined to depart from the text of my dear

friend Mrs. Gamp, and say: "Which blest is the man as has not his kiver full of sich."' [51]

Nevertheless, Dickens did love his children and loved them deeply. When they grew up, he was, indeed, disappointed in some of them: in one letter to Collins, he commends himself to the gratitude of the nation 'for having brought up the largest family ever known, with the smallest disposition to do anything for themselves.' [52] But while they were children, his relations with them were perfectly unclouded. 'He had a peculiar tone of voice and way of speaking for each of his children,' writes Mamie Dickens, 'who could tell, without being called by name, which was the one addressed.' And she goes on to testify to his amazing skill in a sick-room: 'In all our childish ailments his visits were eagerly looked forward to. . . .' [53] His other daughter, Mrs. Perugini, tells us that he would leave his work if necessary 'in the middle of a sentence, and without protest, if a slight domestic difficulty of any kind hurried him into acting as judge or advisor.' [54] His behavior after Plorn's departure for Australia, when, upon the housekeeper's asking him how the boy went off, Dickens 'burst into tears, and couldn't answer her a word,' [55] is plainly the behavior of a loving father, and further evidence may be found in the touching story of his grief over the death of Dora, infant though she was.[56]

But though Dickens found no special joy in the rôle of the disciplinarian, that does not mean that he was a foolishly indulgent father. Indeed, some aspects of his discipline may seem to us to-day somewhat formal and austere, as when he once caught his son Alfred brushing his coat in the dining-room, and, as the man later testified, 'I never by any chance committed that particular offence afterwards.' [57] But how

mild the Dickens discipline was compared to that prevailing in other families of the time, the older children learned when they were entrusted to the care of the Macreadys during the absence of their parents in America. It was not that the Macreadys were unkind or unjust in any way. Simply, the spirit of childlike gayety that pervaded their father's house was altogether lacking.[58]

Dickens's ability to look at the child's problem from the child's own point of view was, as I see it, a real achievement, and one which could have been possible only to an intensely sympathetic nature. It made him scrupulous, for example, in the matter of justice: he was anxious not only that his acts should be justified in his own eyes, but also — what was much more important — that they should be justified in the eyes of the children themselves. 'In the little world in which children have their existence, whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only a small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its rocking-horse stands as many hands high, according to scale, as a big-boned Irish hunter.' [59] Again, we are told he never scorned at childish fears, no matter how small they were. Instead he met the child on his own ground, reasoned with him, and tried to make him see how unnecessary his fears were. Sometimes, of course, reason would not serve, and then he would sit in the dark by the side of the little bed, and hold the child's hand until she fell asleep.[60]

III

Children, however, were not the only subordinates with whom Dickens had to deal, and in connection with whom his

spirit was tested. There is surprisingly little information available concerning his relations with his servants. Once he strikes at the ill-mannered custom of addressing servant-maids by their last names alone,[61] but this does not get us far. Fortunately, a few incidents have been preserved which go to show that Dickens's sensitiveness and his humor did not desert him just here where they desert so many.

Once a new servant, unused to the mechanics of his household, mismanaged a lift, smashing the crockery and bruising her arm. Quick as a flash, Dickens jumped up from his place and ran to her: 'Never mind the breakage; is your arm hurt?' [62] Once the wages of the garden boy were some weeks in arrears. Miss Hogarth heard of it and telegraphed Dickens in London. 'He came down by the next train, at once sent for the gardener and asked him to explain what had happened. As it turned out he had been holding back the wages which he had received for the boy, he had a *mauvais quart d'heure* and notice to leave.' [63] The final story is more entertaining. Once, during Dickens's absence from home, his butler was entertaining friends, when suddenly the door opened and the master walked in. There was a general stampede. At first Dickens seemed to feel he ought to be angry. Then he began to laugh and he laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks. 'Stay, sir, stay! Your friends must not leave my roof until they have sampled the French wine, and then, in my name, you must wish them all a very merry Christmas.' [64]

Closely allied to the love of children in human hearts is a love of the four-footed creatures which have been entrusted to our care. Dickens's heart went out to animals of every

description. He was *persona grata* at the London Zoölogical Gardens, where, says Fields, 'He chaffed with the monkeys, coaxed the tigers, and bamboozled the snakes, with a dexterity unapproachable.' [65] The many dogs of the Dickens household are not unknown to fame, and they range in type from Mamie Dickens's little Pomeranian, Mrs. Bouncer, to the vicious Sultan, who, after having bolted a kitten and committed sundry other misdemeanors, was finally regretfully condemned to be shot. Barnaby's dog and Florence Dombey's are remembered by readers of Dickens's novels, but Dora Copperfield's Jip will probably always be thought of as his best study in canine psychology.[66]

With cats he was on terms of almost equal cordiality, though I imagine no cat-lover will ever forgive him for the shooting-party he once allowed a half-witted servant to stage at Boulogne by way of protecting the beloved canary Dick.[67] Miss Dickens, however, tells one of the best of all cat stories in the engaging chronicle of Williamina, who deliberately chose Dickens's study as a nursery for her numerous offspring, and who, in spite of many arguments, carried the day triumphantly, as a strong-minded cat generally does. Among the less popular animals, Dickens seems to have had an especial fondness for pigs,[68] and oddly enough he appears not to have cared for cows, whom he once denounced half-seriously as 'humbugs, who have been getting into poetry and all sorts of places without the smallest reason.' [69]

Birds and insects come in for close observation on Dickens's part, and the canary Dick, who was honored with a small tombstone after his death, and for whom his master composed an epitaph, he seems sincerely to have loved. Of

course he had a strong tendency to regard birds and insects, like everything else, as if they possessed human emotions, to work out parallels between their doings and those of human beings. Thus in an 1861 letter to Wilkie Collins, he speaks of the blue-bottles, 'banging their heads against the window-glass in the most astonishing manner. I think there must be some competitive examination somewhere, and these nine have been rejected.' After the signature, he adds a post-script: 'I reopen this to state that the most madly despondent blue-bottle has committed suicide, and fallen dead on the carpet.' [70] Although he liked to have birds about, it always hurt him to think that they must be caged. In 'Martin Chuzzlewit,' he speaks most sympathetically of the caged birds in the fancier's shop: 'The shutters were down certainly; and in every pane of glass there was at least one tiny bird in a tiny bird-cage, twittering and hopping his little ballet of despair, and knocking his head against the roof: while one unhappy goldfinch who lived outside a red villa with his name on the door, drew the water for his own drinking, and mutely appealed to some good man to drop a farthing's worth of poison in it.' [71]

I think it worth mentioning also in connection with Dickens's love of animals that he seems never to have hunted or to have been interested in hunting in any way. I know there are killers of animals who persuade themselves that they are also lovers of animals, but personally I have never been able to put very much faith in their protestations.[72]

IV

The last of the five tests of character that I propose to apply to Dickens in this chapter is the test of friendship. As

a writer, he is one of the friendliest and most companionable of all who have sought through books to share their souls with their fellow-men, and as a man, he had the same endearing qualities. Luke Fildes, describing his first meeting with him, speaks of his 'indescribable sweetness and kindness of manner — a frank affectionate way that drew me towards him the moment I saw him.' [73] Naturally such manners resulted in attaching many friends to him, and once such attachments were made, Dickens seems to have cherished them, and never to have scorned a frank expression of emotion in connection with them. 'The pleasure of a generous friendship is the steadiest joy in the world. What a glorious and comfortable thing that is to think of!' [74]

Sometimes, no doubt, he was forced to keep up appearances toward those for whom he really felt little regard. Such were the Samuel Carter Halls, of whom he wrote: 'I denounce that amiable couple as the most terrific humbugs known on earth at any period of history.' [75] And there was Frederick Chapman, the publisher, of whom he became terribly impatient at times, and concerning whom he once wrote to Charles Lever: 'My opinion is, that Frederick Chapman is a monstrous Humbug. He had that book of yours from me — in a holiday waistcoat and gold-laced linen — weeks ago. He is away now, and be damned to him, "taking his holiday," as he says. He seems to me to be making holidays one half of his life, and making mistakes the other half, and making money (I suppose) in spite of himself always.' [76] But such cases were clearly in the minority.

Indeed, Dickens goes much farther in avowing his love for his friends than we usually expect to see an Englishman go. Leaving America, he promises to correspond with

Felton, 'because you are a man after my own heart, and I love you *well*.' [77] To Jonathan Chapman he wrote in 1842: 'The ocean can no more divide you and me, than darkness can shut out heaven from a blind man. Were it twenty times as broad as it is, one could send a warm pressure of the hand across it, and I feel, besides, an inexpressible confidence that on one side of it or the other we shall meet again.' [78] Irving, on the way to Spain, is adjured: 'But if you have ever leisure under its sunny skies to think of a man who loves you, and holds communion with your spirit oftener, perhaps, than any other person — . . . and will write to me in London, you will give me an inexpressible amount of pleasure.' [79] In the same vein he wrote Charles Lever: 'And now I put my hand in yours, and say, out of my heart, that I have never had to do with a more frank, more genial, more kind and considerate friend than I have found in you; and that I heartily bless the evening that did at last bring us together.' [80] As time went on, and one by one his friends slipped away from him, there can be no question that Dickens seriously felt their loss. 'I begin to feel like the Spanish monk of whom Wilkie tells, who had grown to believe that the only realities around him were the pictures which he loved, and that all the moving life he saw, or ever had seen, was a shadow and a dream.' [81]

Like most men who love generously, Dickens is frequently accused of having sometimes bestowed his friendship on unworthy objects. Perhaps Edmund Yates and Charles Fechter are the ones most frequently under fire, but there were many who felt that Wilkie Collins was not quite fine enough for the love Dickens gave him. Yet it was the fastidious William Winter who testified of Collins: 'I have had

the fortune of knowing, intimately, many distinguished persons: I have not known any person, distinguished or otherwise, whose society — because of mental breadth, catholic taste, generous feeling, quick appreciation, intrinsic goodness, and sweet courtesy — was so entirely satisfying as that of Wilkie Collins.' [82]

Moreover, Dickens succeeded notably in his friendship with two men whom others found it by no means easy to get along with: John Forster and William Charles Macready. Forster was widely known as a 'harbitrary cove.' It cannot be pretended that Dickens's relations with him were never subjected to strain. James Payn says, 'I rarely met them together without witnessing some sparring between them — and sometimes without the gloves.' [83] I have elsewhere transcribed Macready's description of one very spirited passage between them. Yet their friendship was never really broken, and no one can doubt that each held the other in high regard.

Macready, it is not too much to say, Dickens deeply and reverently loved. He was older than Dickens, and the younger man looked up to him as a great actor and a great man. Such Macready undoubtedly was, but he was a very irritable person for all that. In the course of time he quarreled with many of his friends and in his diary he speaks harshly of them. But of Dickens he says only this: 'Charles Dickens was and is to me the ideal of friendship.' [84] Not even when Macready declined to produce his play did Dickens's loyalty waver for an instant: 'He returned me an answer,' wrote the actor, 'which is an honor to him. How truly delightful it is to meet with high-minded and warm-hearted men.' [85] After Macready went into his lonely retirement,

Dickens was unfailing in sympathy and friendliness toward him. In 1854, we find him writing Clarkson Stanfield, inviting him to go along on a visit to the old actor: 'I really believe there is scarcely anything in the world, that would give him such extraordinary pleasure as such a visit. And if you would empower me to send him an intimation that he may expect it, he will have a daily job in looking forward to the time (I am serious) which we, whose light has not gone out, and who are among our old dear pursuits and associations, can scarcely estimate.' [86] Forster and Macready alike illustrate, it seems to me, Charles Dickens's ability to look beneath the surface in choosing and in judging his friends.

And then there was Hans Christian Andersen. By his own account, he must have been a rather troublesome guest: 'I had been going about, gloomy and reserved, tormenting myself. Dickens found out what was the matter with me, and at once let off a whole piece of fire-works of jest and quips; and when still this did not make its way into the dark crooks of my ill-humour, a seriousness followed, which was full of heartfelt care for me, such warm appreciation, that I felt myself raised up, strengthened, and filled with pleasure, and a strong desire to merit his regard. I looked into my friend's bright, gentle eyes, and I dared thank a severe critic for bringing me one of the most enjoyable moments of my life.' [87]

Dickens was under no delusions about Andersen: Alfred Tennyson Dickens said in one of his lectures that his father had once described Andersen as a cross between Pecksniff and the Ugly Duckling! [88] This was probably later, for we know that Andersen ultimately became such a nuisance to

Dickens that he was forced to draw away from him altogether. But he seems to have been long-suffering enough.

If one may stretch the term 'friendship' for a moment, this may perhaps be the place to say a word about Dickens's attitude toward those 'friends' to whom he was related by ties of blood. Earlier in this chapter, I spoke of his children, and the problem of his wife is dealt with at some length in the chapter on 'Dickens and Love.' There remains, however, the family into which he was born, and to this I have referred hitherto only incidentally. The exact nature of Dickens's troubles with his father in the early years have generally been passed over in silence, and even yet the frankest expressions of the son's dissatisfaction are likely to be in the unpublished letters, like the one quoted by Harry B. Smith in which he speaks of his father's 'damnable shadow.' Yet the letters to Mitton, buried these many years in the files of the 'New York Tribune,' make the whole thing clear enough. In one of them, John Dickens has just been arrested by Shaw and Maxwell, 'the quondam wine people,' and Dickens is asking Mitton to look after some matters he has not the leisure to see to himself. His father has disappeared and has been away all night. 'I own that his absence does not give me any uneasiness knowing how apt he is to get out of the way when anything goes wrong.'[89] And Mrs. Perugini has written of her father, suggestively enough: 'In early life, warned by certain faults in the character of the father he dearly loved, he laid down a few wise rules for the guidance of his own conduct, which for many, many years of his life, I believe, he never departed from.'[90] John Dickens was a man of considerable charm, but on the whole it does not seem that Mr. Straus is much

too severe when he calls him 'little more than a wastrel, and a not very honest wastrel at that.' [91]

The interesting thing here is Dickens's own loyalty. His father did not do much for him: indeed, when he was asked, on one occasion, where his son had been educated, he replied, with a laugh, that he might be said to have educated himself. He gave Dickens much trouble, and Dickens was often greatly annoyed with him, but in later years when he was famous, he seems always to have been as respectful toward his father as if that personage had been a great man. To be sure, John Dickens had, meanwhile, to a certain extent, mended his ways. Late in life, amazingly enough, he learned shorthand and became a reporter. When the 'Daily News' was founded in 1846 with Charles Dickens as editor, the novelist made his father manager of the reporting staff, a position which he held until 1851, with such men as Blanchard Jerrold and Laman Blanchard working under him.[92] Indeed, Bradbury's treatment of his father was one of the features of this connection which seemed distinctly offensive to Dickens. 'And to these I must add, with great pain, that I have not always observed Mr. Bradbury's treatment of my father (than whom there is not a more zealous, disinterested, or useful gentleman attached to the paper) to be very creditable to himself, or delicate towards me.' [93]

Toward his mother, Dickens was, I am afraid, somewhat less sympathetic,[94] though there is no evidence to show that he was ever remiss in his attentions to her. At least, she was not able sufficiently to atone for the delinquencies of the father in that household to prevent her son from moving into bachelor quarters some time before his marriage.[95] His brothers caused him much embarrassment. To Frederick he

wrote, December 12, 1856: 'I have already done more for you than most dispassionate persons would consider right or reasonable in itself. But, considered with any fair reference to the great expenses I have sustained for other relatives, it becomes little else than monstrous. The possibility of your having any further assistance from me, is absolutely and finally past.' [96] But he was sincerely devoted to his sister Fanny (Mrs. Burnett), who died of consumption at the early age of thirty-eight. Not only did his love for her inspire the lovely 'Child's Dream of a Star,' but, as Robert Langton pointed out, the name Fanny occurs eleven times as the name of characters in her brother's books. Langton connects her also with this passage in 'The Haunted Man': 'My sister, doubly dear, doubly devoted — lived on to see me famous — and then died — died gentle as ever, happy, and with no concern but for her brother.' [97]

As for Dickens's failures in friendship — his quarrels with Thackeray, Jerrold, and Lemon particularly — I shall discuss these matters with their implications elsewhere, and my conclusions need not be anticipated here. Yet, when all allowances are made, Dickens's achievements in friendship seem to me notable and worthy of respect. Surely many must have shared Mary Cowden Clarke's dismay when, in the early Italian morning, in that fatal June of 1870, she opened her paper and read the line: '*Carlo Dickens é morto*' — and, as she says, 'the sun seemed suddenly blotted out, as I looked upon the fatal line.' [98]

CHAPTER VI

DICKENS AND LOVE

I

DICKENS'S interest in women generally seems to have been nothing more than the healthy, normal, natural, inevitable, masculine sort. There are not many references in his letters to the women whom he saw or met casually in his travels, not enough surely to indicate that he was particularly on the lookout for the excitement that a pretty face can bring. Generally he is perfectly conventional, superficial: 'Yesterday I dined at the bookseller's with a body of Translators engaged on my new Edition — one of them a lady, young and pretty.' [1] Or, referring to one of his reading audiences: 'Our show of beauty at night is, generally, remarkable; but we had not a dozen pretty women in the whole throng last night, and the faces were all blunt.' [2]

Sometimes, incited by the novelist's lively curiosity about mental processes, Dickens felt a strong desire to talk to a strange woman who had attracted his attention, to get inside of her and find out what she was thinking. But I do not find that he often gratified that desire. Of one such case he wrote Wilkie Collins from Paris. 'I mean to walk about to-night and look for her. I didn't speak to her there, but I have a fancy that I should like to know more about her. Never shall, I suppose.' [3] Occasionally, however, he did find himself in a position where he could play with a woman in a perfectly innocent way, and when this happened he seems terrifically to have enjoyed himself: 'The landlady of the

little inn at Allonby lived at Greta Bridge, in Yorkshire, when I went down there before "Nickleby," and was smuggled into the room to see me, when I was secretly found out. She is an immensely fat woman now. "But I could tuck my arm round her waist then, Mr. Dickens," the landlord said when he told me the story as I was going to bed the night before last. "And can't you do it now," I said, "you insensible dog? Look at me! Here's a picture!" Accordingly I got round as much of her as I could; and this gallant action was the most successful I have ever performed, on the whole.'[4] Once, in America, he was more daring, even, than that: he measured a dancer's skirt with his dress glove, and found it to be just three gloves long![5]

The sensuous element, however, enters hardly at all into Dickens's descriptions of women, whether in fiction or in life. Perhaps one should, in this connection, make it a matter of record that young Martin Chuzzlewit, in New York, is considerably excited over two young ladies 'wearing miraculously small shoes, and the thinnest possible silk stockings: the which their rocking-chairs developed to a distracting extent';[6] but one must admit at the same time that the case is pretty desperate when it is 'evidence' of this sort upon which reliance must be placed. In 'The Cricket on the Hearth,' there is a reference, first, to Mrs. Peerybingle's pluming herself upon her legs and keeping them neat in point of stockings,[7] and, second, to Miss Tilly Slowboy's partiality for grazing hers.[8] Once, in Flanders, Dickens went to observe the native women dancing, and found that, 'in their short petticoats and light caps,' they were unusually attractive.[9] In a similar vein he speaks of the women at 'Our French Watering Place' as having 'the finest legs ever

carved by Nature in the brightest mahogany.' [10] When he visited the Shaker settlement in America, he debated in his own mind the much-discussed question of Shaker celibacy, and the conclusion to which he came strikingly recalls Mark Twain's meditations when faced with the very different problem of the Mormon ladies in Utah: 'There is no union of the sexes, and every Shaker, male and female, is devoted to a life of celibacy. Rumour has been busy upon this theme, but here again I must refer to the lady of the store, and say, that if many of the Shaker sisters resemble her, I treat all such slander as bearing on its face the strongest marks of wild improbability.' [11] And that is about all I can find. If women ever gave Dickens any unholy thrills, he kept them strictly to himself.

There is considerable satire in Dickens's portraits of women, though this element cannot be said to predominate in any way. Some of it, of course, is purely conventional — the stock charges of the humorist against women since time began. Thus it is 'quite impossible that any difference of opinion can take place among women without every woman who is within hearing taking active part in it,' [12] and, of course, no woman ever sees more than one side of any question.[13] He feels that the temptation 'of hearing something at present enveloped in mystery' is 'irresistible to the female mind,' [14] and he hits false modesty and affectation generally. Some other matters have perhaps rather more individuality about them. In Mrs. Skewton, of 'Dombey and Son,' he ridiculed at once the mercenary mother and the soulless woman of fashion, and Mrs. MacStinger and her daughter, in the same novel, constitute a merciless picture of the man-trap. In Mrs. Gowan, of 'Little Dorrit,' he takes a fling at

elderly women who make up their faces,[15] and the hypochondriac comes in for her share of attention in the 'Sketches.'[16] He opposed giddy, fashionable education as tending to disqualify women for the life of the home:[17] it is along this line, in 'Great Expectations,' that he contemptuously dismisses Mrs. Pocket as highly ornamental but hardly useful.[18] In 'Nicholas Nickleby,' the working-girl — the same type of girl that he admired so heartily in Lowell, Massachusetts, on his first American tour —[19] is brought into effective contrast with the 'lady,' much to the lady's disadvantage,[20] and the same idea is involved in the much more sympathetic presentation, in 'Bleak House,' of Lady Dedlock as the society woman who has been schooled to emotional stagnation.[21] All in all, simplicity and sincerity seem to have been the qualities that Dickens admired most in women, and affectation and laziness those that he most abhorred.

As I have said, however, this element of censure is quite subordinate. There is almost ecstatic appreciation of the other side. In 'The Convict's Return,' in 'The Pickwick Papers,' Dickens speaks of the 'feelings of forbearance and meekness under suffering . . . to which all God's creatures, but women, are strangers.'[22] In 'The Wreck of the Golden Mary,' Ravender testifies thus to the patience of his fellows in the lifeboat: 'I was not surprised by it in the women; for all men born of women know what great qualities they will show when men will fail; but, I own I was a little surprised by it in some of the men.'[23] Similarly, in an 1847 speech, Dickens himself speaks of women as 'the most devoted and least selfish natures that we know on earth.'[24] Indeed, the long-suffering nature of woman seems especially to have im-

pressed him: one almost feels that it was thus, through the contemplation of her suffering, that he was led to such understanding as he possessed of the beauty of woman's soul. Could there be a finer line of approach for any man?

Of all human types, Dickens seems most to have felt the charm of the saintly, Perdita-like young girl, though I am afraid it cannot be claimed that he always succeeded in reproducing her very convincingly. Witness Rose Maylie, of 'Oliver Twist,' whom he describes as follows: 'The younger lady was in the lovely bloom and springtime of womanhood; at that age, when, if ever angels be for God's good purposes enthroned in mortal forms, they may be, without impiety, supposed to abide in such as hers.' [25] In much the same vein is this charming passage from 'The Old Curiosity Shop': 'If you have seen the picture gallery of any one old family, you will remember how the same face and figure — often the fairest and slightest of them all — come upon you in different generations; and how you trace the same sweet girl through a long line of portraits — never growing old or changing — the Good Angel of the race — abiding by them in all reverses — redeeming all their sins.' [26]

This does not mean, however, that coarser, less ethereal types do not come in for their share of appreciation also. Such a one is Miss Pross, in 'A Tale of Two Cities,' 'one of those unselfish creatures — found only among women — who will, for pure love and admiration, bind themselves willing slaves, to youth when they have lost it, to beauty that they never had, to accomplishments that they were never fortunate enough to gain, to bright hopes that never shone upon their own sombre lives.' [27] Polly, too, in 'Dombey and Son,' is 'a good plain sample of a nature that is

ever, in the mass, better, truer, higher, nobler, quicker to feel, and much more constant to retain, all tenderness and pity, self-denial and devotion, than the nature of men.' [28] And, finally, there is old Betty Higden, of 'Our Mutual Friend,' 'not a logically-reasoning woman, but God is good, and hearts may count in Heaven as high as heads.' [29]

Certain passages in Dickens's dramatic criticism are especially interesting as revealing his attitude toward women. One is his praise of Fechter's Hamlet: 'Some of the delicacies with which he rendered his conception clear were extremely subtle; and in particular he avoided that brutality towards Ophelia which, with a greater or less amount of coarseness, I have seen in all other Hamlets.' [30] Indeed, Dickens's much-discussed enthusiasm for Fechter's acting seems to have been determined by the actor's chivalrous conduct of love scenes, quite as much as by anything else. He discovered the Frenchman by accident, in a little Parisian theater. 'He was making love to a woman, and he so elevated her as well as himself by the sentiment in which he enveloped her, that they trod in a purer ether, and in another sphere, quite lifted out of the present. By Heavens! I said to myself, a man who can do this can do anything. I never saw two people more purely and instantly elevated by the power of love.' [31] Even more self-revealing — and in a lovely light — is his remark to Westland Marston concerning a point in the acting of one of Marston's plays. 'There is only one thing I should have liked . . . to change. I am much mistaken if any man — least of all any such man — would crush a letter written by the hand of the woman he loved. Hold it to his heart unconsciously and look about for it the while, he might; or he might do anything with it that expressed a

habit of tenderness and affection in association with the idea of her; but he would never crush it under any circumstances. He would as soon crush her heart.' [32]

At the other extreme from such women are the prostituted women, concerning whom the best may be said with reference to Dickens that may be said of any man — that is, that he was sympathetic toward them without being in any sense fascinated by them. For years he was interested in the work conducted by his friend Miss Coutts in behalf of fallen women, and, as part of his work, he wrote an appeal to them which was printed as a pamphlet and given away in the streets.[33]

So long as we make due allowances for modification in the interest of artistic design, it is fair, I think, to judge Dickens's taste in the matter of women by reference to the heroines of his novels. We find here two recurring types: the somewhat unstable, frivolous girl — good at heart — best represented by Dora Spenlow and Dolly Varden, and the young saint, embodied in Rose Maylie, Florence Dombey, Agnes Wickfield, and Little Dorrit. As we shall see, both types had their counterparts in Dickens's personal life — his first love, Maria Beadnell, being the silly little thing, while his adored young sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, was the model for all the spirituelle girls. For reasons which will appear later, however, it is evident that some of the elements of David Copperfield's dissatisfaction with Dora were drawn, not from Maria Beadnell, but from Mrs. Dickens.

Toward his saintly heroines, as we have seen, Dickens's attitude is consistently worshipful. But he seems to have had a special tenderness for the kittenish type also, and his presentation of her is much too sympathetic to be called

accidental. Especially with Dolly Varden he is at pains to make it clear to us that the coquetting was all on the surface, that underneath were all the depth and sincerity of a woman's love: 'Light hearts, light hearts that float so gaily on a smooth stream, that are so sparkling and buoyant in the sunshine — down upon fruit, bloom upon flowers, blush in summer air, life of the winged insect, whose whole existence is a day — how soon ye sink in troubled water! Poor Dolly's heart — a little, gentle, idle, fickle thing; giddy, restless, fluttering; constant to nothing, but bright looks, and smiles and laughter — Dolly's heart was breaking.' [34] It can hardly be pretended that Dora was capable of anything like the evolution which Dolly undergoes toward the close of the book, but Dickens's presentation of her is, perhaps because of her weakness, infinitely more tender. There is a world of understanding in Aunt Betsey's advice to David, to estimate Dora 'by the qualities she has, and not by the qualities she may not have.' [35] The picture of David's marriage is realistic enough, as when we see the helpless child-wife subject to the cruel vicissitudes of sex,[36] and, again, at the close, where the last of her story is told with a profoundly true and moving manly tenderness. Dora grows wise before her end: she perceives that people do not change fundamentally, even for love.

What Dickens would have thought of the many functions that woman has added to herself since his day may properly admit of considerable question. To be sure, he considered himself a liberal. Did he not approve the opening of the Royal Academy to women? [37] Did he not feel they ought to be admitted freely to the Liverpool Mechanics Institution? [38] Did he not say that 'All the arts, and many of the sciences

bear witness that women, even in their present oppressed condition, can attain to quite as great distinction, and can win quite as lofty names as men'? [39] And does not his eldest daughter tell us that she and her sister were never coddled when they were small, and that they were often permitted to travel alone between London and the Isle of Wight? [40] But these are, after all, details. On larger matters I do not find that he was quite so liberal. His opposition to the woman with a mission is beautifully expressed in his portrait of Mrs. Jellyby, and in one of his editorials he declares bluntly that the function of woman is to create a haven of refuge for man.[41] In 'woman's rights' he was interested not at all, as his advice to Belinda Bates, in 'The Haunted House,' still remains to testify,[42] and a woman at the head of the house he regarded in the amiable light of a monstrosity.[43] All in all, in spite of his sentimental worship of women, in spite of his realization that men need to be lenient in judging women for what they have to endure from men,[44] I feel he was quite well satisfied, on the whole, to have the world managed by the male persuasion.[45]

II

From Dickens's attitude toward women, we pass, by a natural, easy transition, to his attitude toward love. This is not wholly romantic. As Mrs. Maylie knows that the emotions of youth are 'generous impulses which do not last,' [46] so Dickens himself points out that love 'is very materially assisted by a warm and active imagination, which has a long memory, and will thrive for a considerable period on very slight and sparing food.' [47] He is a good deal inclined to doubt the pious assumption that love excludes selfish con-

siderations, inclining rather to the supposition that many of those who nobly relinquished their love did nothing more heroic than make a virtue of a necessity.[48] And with the extreme romantic assumption that love is a law unto itself, he has no patience whatever. Not only Kate and Nicholas Nickleby, but Dickens's decent characters generally are very positive that the claims of love upon human life are quite secondary to those of duty.

Dickens knows that the lover often idealizes the object of his adoration, as Twemlow did, until the image he carries in his heart bears no resemblance to that which actually exists: 'For, the poor little harmless gentleman once had his fancy, like the rest of us, and she didn't answer (as she often does not), and he thinks the adorable bridesmaid is like the fancy as she was then (which she is not at all), and that if the fancy had not married some one else for money, but had married him for love, he and she would have been happy (which they wouldn't have been), and that she has a tenderness for him still (whereas her toughness is a proverb).'[49] He knows, too, that love is often, not only against reason, but wholly unconnected with the highest impulses of the soul: 'According to my experience,' says Pip, in 'Great Expectations,' 'the conventional notion of a lover cannot be always true. The unqualified truth is, that when I loved Estella with the love of a man, I loved her simply because I found her irresistible. Once for all; I knew to my sorrow, often and often, if not always, that I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be. Once for all; I loved her none the less because I knew it, and it had no more influence in restraining me, than if I had devoutly believed her to be

human perfection.' [50] In 'Little Dorrit,' an equally unreasonable love in the heart of a woman, Minnie Meagles, leads definitely to disaster in her marriage with Henry Gowan, and in the last novels, love drives Bradley Headstone and Mr. Jasper into virtual madness.

Yet Dickens's appreciation of love far outweighs his sense of its follies and its crimes. No decent person in all his novels ever scorns or repudiates love: when cynical views need to be expressed, they are put into the mouth of a thorough-going scoundrel like Ralph Nickleby or the elder Chester.[51] Even when love is hopeless, it is worth while. 'No man ever really loved a woman, lost her, and knew her with a blameless though an unchanged mind, when she was a wife and a mother, but her children had a strange sympathy with him — an instinctive delicacy of pity for him.' [52] In 'Dombey and Son,' there is a beautiful passage on love and grief: 'But it is not in the nature of pure love to burn so fiercely and unkindly long. The flame that in its grosser composition has the taint of earth, may prey upon the breast that gives it shelter; but the sacred fire from heaven is as gentle in the heart, as when it rested on the heads of the assembled twelve, and showed each man his brother, brightened and unhurt.' [53]

All in all, it seems fair to leave this phase of Dickens with his comment upon the marriage of John and Bella in 'Our Mutual Friend': 'And oh! there are days in this life worth life and worth death. And oh! what a bright old song it is, that Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!' [54]

III

Four women need to be considered definitely in the record of Dickens's life: Maria Beadnell, whom he loved and lost in his youth, and who lives in his novels, first as Dora Copperfield and then as Flora Finching; and the three Hogarth sisters: Catherine, whom he married, who bore him ten children, and then separated from him; Mary, who died at the age of seventeen, shortly after Dickens's marriage, and who remained all his life his ideal of womanly purity and charm; and Georgina, who managed his household from 1858, when he separated from her sister, until his death in 1870, and whom he called 'the best and truest friend man ever had.' [55]

Many curious paradoxes are suggested by the thought of Dickens's relations with these women. Catherine he seems never to have loved with anything approaching a really romantic passion. He lived with her, he begot children upon her, the domestic tragedy they shared together was the great crisis of his life, and it shook and aged him, more perhaps than he ever admitted, even to himself, yet I cannot find that Catherine ever entered that inner world where her husband lived with his soul. With Georgina, who in all household matters played the part of a wife to him for so many years, his relations never passed an intimate and affectionate friendship. Mary was hardly a woman to him at all: she was an ideal, and she remained in that light to the end of his days. Maria he wanted to marry, and when she refused him, he thought his heart was broken. It was under the inspiration of his love for her that he began to fight his way out of obscurity, and long after his hopes had died, he continued to cherish her in his heart. Yet when he met her

again, years afterward, there was a cruel disillusionment in store for him, and the lovely Dora of 'David Copperfield' faded out into the silly Flora of 'Little Dorrit.' So Catherine and Maria both passed out of his life long before the end. There remained the ideal of Mary, to be worshiped, Beatrice-fashion, at some inner shrine, and the living, bustling, kindly presence of Georgina. But love he had put definitely behind him, long before the end.

Excepting only Kate Douglas Wiggin's incomparable 'Child's Journey with Dickens,' the Letters to Maria Beadnell is the most charming of all Dickens books, and it is a thousand pities that it should be available only in the limited edition prepared for the members of the Boston Bibliophile Society. Maria Beadnell was the youngest daughter of George Beadnell, banker, of Lombard Street. Dickens met her in 1830, through his friend Henry Kolle, and embraced the opportunity immediately to fall in love with her. The romance continued, on a somewhat precarious footing, for three years. Then, on the eighteenth of March, 1833, Dickens wrote her a letter definitely breaking off relations with her. The details are not clear, but it is evident enough that Dickens was madly in love with Maria, and that she was not in love with him. She seems to have liked him well enough, however, just enough, that is, to enjoy flirting with him and torturing him, though never enough to give him the definite assurances he wanted from her. Besides this natural flirtatious instability on the part of the lady (which would have been quite enough in itself), there were two other dangerous elements in the situation. One was Miss Mary Anne Leigh, a friend and confidante of Miss Beadnell's, who either was in love with Dickens herself or

else simply possessed of a natural desire to make mischief, and Professor George Pierce Baker, who edited the correspondence, is probably right in thinking that the other emanated from Maria's parents, and was motived largely by fear of Dickens's poverty.

For him the Beadnell days must have been a period of terrific misery. 'I have often said before, and I say again, I have borne more from you than I do believe any creature breathing ever bore from a woman before.' [56] Finally his condition became so desperate that, lovesick as he was, he realized that the only thing to do was to make an end of it. But not even that could quench his love or bring him peace, for a little later we find him writing Maria again, in search of a reconciliation. 'I have never loved and I never can love any human creature but yourself.' [57] Fortunately, the young lady was kind enough not to prolong the agony.

The hurt was a deep one, and it was long cherished. It is true that much of our information concerning it comes from the letters he wrote her in 1855, when communication was once more established between them, but he is very specific, and there is no reason to doubt his essential truthfulness. 'I hardly ever go into the city,' he says, 'but I walk up an odd little court at the back of the Mansion House and come out by the corner of Lombard Street.' [58] He tells her, too, that 'to the hour when I opened your letter last Friday night, I have never heard anybody addressed by your name, or spoken of by your name without a start.' [59] And these sentences were written when he had not seen her for nearly twenty-five years!

Indeed, Dickens himself was always sure that his affair with Maria Beadnell had not only impelled and directed his

career, but definitely modified his character as well. It was under her unhappy inspiration that he began to write, first, in the hope that if he made something of himself, it might help him to win her, then, increasingly as a refuge from his ill success and an end in itself. 'I have always believed since, and always shall to the last, that there never was such a faithful and devoted poor fellow as I was. Whatever of fancy, romance, energy, passion, aspiration and determination belong to me, I never have separated and never shall separate from the hard-hearted little woman — you — whom it is nothing to say I would have died for with the greatest alacrity!' [60] The effect on character was not, however, wholly happy. 'My entire devotion to you, and the wasted tenderness of those hard years which I have ever since half loved, half dreaded to recall, made so deep an impression on me that I refer to it a habit of suppression which now belongs to me, which I know is no part of my original nature, but which makes me chary of showing my affections, even to my children, except when they are very young.' [61]

Being a writer, and the sort of writer he was, it was inevitable that Dickens should make literary capital out of this most poignant experience of his youth, and nothing could show better than his behavior in this connection the real hold that Maria had on him. Once he began to write an autobiography, but when he came to the love affair, he 'lost courage and burned the rest.' [62] He succeeded much better when he came to rework the experience as fiction in 'David Copperfield,' and we have his own testimony that he wrote the book hoping she might read it and lay it down to say: 'How dearly that boy must have loved me, and how vividly the man remembers it!' [63] How powerfully Dora affected

Dickens, and with what extreme reluctance he brought her little life to a close, we have already seen in another connection.[64]

And then, the anticlimax. In 1855, like a bolt from the blue, comes a letter from Maria Beadnell, now Mrs. Winter. The old flame springs up in Dickens, and he writes her two almost indecorously warm letters. 'No one but myself has the slightest knowledge of my correspondence. . . . I could be nowhere addressed with stricter privacy or in more absolute confidence than at my own house.' [65] Maria, you see, hasn't learned anything: she has the same kittenish ideas of what friendly intercourse consists of in 1855 that had been hers twenty years ago. And Dickens apparently hasn't learned anything either: he is going to succumb to her blandishments all over again, just as he did in the first place. He tells her that Lady Olliffe asked him recently whether it was true that he used to love Maria Beadnell 'so very, very, very much,' and he replied 'that there was no woman in the world, and there were very few men, who could ever imagine how much.' [66] Both feel that they must see each other again, and compare notes after all these years. The question is how. 'I am a dangerous man to be seen with, for so many people know me.' On the whole, he thinks the best place would be at his house. 'You would not like better to call here on Sunday, asking first for Catherine and then for me? It is almost a positive certainty that there will be no one here but I, between 3 and 4.' [67] Finally, there is one sentence at least that has the genuine ring of passion in it: 'Remember, I accept all with my whole soul, and reciprocate all.' [68]

And then he saw her.

After that there was no more danger that Charles Dickens would deviate in any way from the strict standards of bourgeois, middle-class respectability.

We have no record of their meeting. But what happened may fairly be inferred from two circumstances: first, the very decided change of tone in the letters Dickens wrote her after the interview; and, second, the difference between Dora and Flora. The manners which had seemed enticing in a girl of nineteen were merely comic twenty-two years afterwards, now that she was fat and middle-aged and her beauty vanished somewhere into the dim yesterdays. It is useless to accuse Dickens of inconsistency in this matter, or to suppose that, because he was cruelly disillusioned, his love was shallow. He had never loved Mrs. Winter, for he had never known her. All these years he had carried in his heart the image of a girl who no longer existed. Meeting her again, he simply found, as so many do, that human dreams are one thing and actuality is another. If, in reading 'David Copperfield,' Maria laid down the book to say, 'How dearly that boy must have loved me, and how vividly the man remembers it!' I wonder what she said when she laid down 'Little Dorrit'! Perhaps a kind Providence took care of her, and she may never have known that Flora Finching was meant for her. Dickens's own defense of himself, in the person of Arthur Clennam, is perfectly convincing: 'Most men will be found sufficiently true to themselves to be true to an old idea. It is no proof of an inconstant mind, but exactly the opposite, when the idea will not bear close comparison with the reality, and the contrast is a fatal shock to it.' [69]

In its humble way, the Beadnell episode in Dickens's life is a neat little study in disillusion. It was not pleasant for

him to get that cold shower-bath in 1855, but it probably was good for him. Only it came a little too late. If only he might have had it ten years earlier!

IV

Mary Hogarth's story is much less dramatic. It begins with her death, at the age of seventeen, in the early spring of 1837, when Dickens was young in his married life. Her going-away was fearfully sudden and entirely unexpected, and not even the tremendous exhilaration of 'Pickwick's' thrilling success could for the time keep up her brother-in-law's courage. After two monthly numbers had been missed, he sufficiently gained possession of himself to resume his work. In October he wrote to her mother: 'I have never had her ring off my finger by day or night, except for an instant at a time, to wash my hands, since she died. I have never had her sweetness and excellence absent from my mind so long. I can solemnly say that, waking or sleeping, I have never lost the recollection of our hard trial and sorrow, and I feel that I never shall.' [70]

He never did. 'After she died I dreamed of her every night for many months — I think for the better part of a year — sometimes as a spirit, sometimes as a living creature, never with any of the bitterness of my real sorrow, but always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down at night without a hope of the vision coming back in one shape or another.' [71] In 1842, when he stood beside Niagara, thousands of miles away from anything she had ever touched, all that he could think of was her. 'I was going to add, what would I give if the dear girl whose ashes lie in Kensal Green, had lived to

come so far along with us — but she has been here many times, I doubt not, since her sweet face faded from my earthly sight.' [72] On another occasion he generalizes as follows: 'She is so much in my thoughts at all times, especially when I am successful, and have greatly prospered in anything, that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is.' [73] Forster assures us that 'in the very year before he died, the influence was potently upon him.' [74]

By that time, of course, Mary Hogarth was no more Mary Hogarth than Maria Beadnell had been Mrs. Winter — or than it was Beatrice Portinari, the Florentine lady, who led Dante into Paradise. She had become the symbol of everything Dickens honored in woman, and all the beauty that his imagination could conjure up had attached itself to her. Consequently, as I have already suggested, the saintly girl — the constantly recurring type in Dickens's novels. Every one was drawn from Mary Hogarth, as she lived in his heart and thus became a part of the world's literature. It is entirely conceivable that if she had not lived — or if she had not died — we should never have had Rose Maylie and Little Nell and Florence Dombey and Little Dorrit. Certainly we should not have had them quite as they are to-day. The circumstances attending the serious illness of Rose Maylie, in 'Oliver Twist' (which does not terminate fatally), have always been felt to reflect the intensity of Dickens's agony at the time of Mary's death. There is an interesting bit of corroboration also in Langton's pointing out that the key-words of Mary Hogarth's epitaph, written by Dickens — 'Young, beautiful, and good, God numbered her among his angels at the early age of seventeen' — are definitely

echoed in Dickens's descriptions of Rose, Nell, and Florence.[75]

Percy Fitzgerald, who has written much of value concerning Dickens, is also responsible for what seems to me one of the worst of all possible suggestions — the supposition that it was Mary Hogarth whom Dickens really loved, but that she sacrificed herself for her sister as Marion does in 'The Battle of Life.' According to this hypothesis, Mary continued to love Dickens until her death, but he was now her brother-in-law and therefore unattainable. This barrier between Dickens and Mary appears in 'Oliver Twist', where it is transformed into Rose Maylie's illegitimate birth, the obstacle standing in the way of her union with Harry Maylie![76] This is worse than unconvincing: it is vulgar and disgusting. It is quite as bad as Frank Harris's maunderings over Shakespeare's sonnets, and if I could think of anything worse I should say it! Only a low order of mind assumes that, because a man honors a woman and cherishes her memory, he must have been in love with her or desirous of establishing sex relations with her. There is not the remotest hint in any word of Dickens's concerning Mary Hogarth that he ever thought of her in that way. She was not Maria Beadnell. If he had, she must indeed have driven Maria out of his thoughts, which, contrariwise, as we have seen, she infested until 1855. Why degrade a pure passion to the moral standing-ground of a near-liaison?

V

Yet, in spite of all Dickens's reverence for love, the melancholy fact remains that he failed completely with the woman who entrusted her life to him, and she on her part failed

quite as completely with him, so that he summed the situation up, probably fairly, a short time before their separation, by saying that if they did not write finis to their life together, they would each drive the other insane! Clear understanding of their relations is made difficult or impossible to-day by the absence of the necessary materials. Especially after the separation, those who possessed authentic information seemed to feel that it was proper to discuss it only with bated breath. Forster's chapter, 'What Happened at This Time,' is a masterpiece of skillful exposition, and certainly the best thing that has even yet been written on the subject. But Forster moves here within much too closely defined limits: indeed, Mrs. Dickens was still alive, and his hands were tied. Even without that, however, one cannot help feeling that Forster's theory in the matter was wrong. He says: 'The course taken by the author of this book at the time of those occurrences, will not be departed from here. Such illustration of grave defects in Dickens's character as the passage in his life affords, I have not shrunk from placing side by side with such excuses in regard to it as he had unquestionable right to claim should be put forward also. How far what remained of his story took tone or colour from it, and especially from the altered career on which at the same time he entered, will thus be sufficiently explained; and with anything else the public have nothing to do.' [77]

This undoubtedly sounds well, but it is arrant nonsense. You may, if you choose, take the position that no information concerning the private life of a writer belongs to the public, that so far as his readers are concerned, his life is written in his books, and that what is not in his books is no concern of theirs. Or you may grant, on the other hand, that

his work cannot be understood except in intimate connection with his life, from which it must logically follow that students of literature are entitled to *all* the information concerning him that may be available. But there is no halfway house. *Some* information, especially on a matter of this kind, must always be far more misleading than no information at all.

It may be well to begin with a word on Mrs. Dickens's external appearance and the reactions of others to her. The Maclise portraits show a very slender, mild-looking woman, of no particular force of character, but of a decidedly amiable English beauty. Some observers were impressed by these things and very appreciative of them, for example, G. W. Putnam, who served as Dickens's secretary during his first American tour: 'Mrs. Dickens was a lady of moderate height; with a full, well-developed form, a beautiful face and good figure. I call to mind the high full forehead, the brown hair gracefully arranged, the look of English healthfulness in the warm glow of color in her cheeks, the blue eyes with a tinge of violet, well-arched brows, a well-shaped nose, and a mouth small and of uncommon beauty. She was decidedly a handsome woman, and would have attracted notice as such in any gathering of ladies anywhere. She had a quiet dignity mingled with great sweetness of manner; her calm quietness differing much from the quick, earnest, always cheerful, but keen and nervous temperament of her husband, — a temperament belonging to the existence, and absolutely necessary to the development of a great genius like that of Charles Dickens.' [78]

Similarly, Hans Christian Andersen: 'I found a quiet, a womanliness, and a reserve in Mrs. Dickens; yet when she

talked, her gentle eyes would flash, and her mouth take on a smile of good nature, while there was in her voice something so attractive that I could think only of Agnes.' [79] * In America, Charles Sumner was impressed by her 'mild, unexacting character and manners,' [80] and Richard H. Dana, Jr. said: 'She is natural in her manners, seems not at all elated by her new position, but rests upon a foundation of good sense and good feeling.' [81]

But there were those who were less favorably impressed. Thus, Philip Hone: 'Mrs. Dickens is a little, fat, English-looking woman, of an agreeable countenance, and, I should think, "a nice person."' [82] A 'young lady of Cincinnati,' otherwise unnamed, said: 'Mrs. Dickens is a large woman, having a great deal of color, and is rather coarse; but she has a good face and looks amiable.' [83] Eleanor Christian's first impression of her was of 'a pretty little woman, with the heavy-lidded large blue eyes so much admired by men. The nose was a little retroussé, the forehead good, mouth small, round, and red-lipped, with a pleasant smiling expression, notwithstanding the sleepy look of the slow-moving eyes. The weakest part of the face was the chin, which melted too suddenly into the throat.' [84] Mrs. L. K. Lippincott remembered her as 'a plump, rosy, English, handsome woman, with a certain air of absent-mindedness, but gentle and kindly.' [85]

Thus it will be seen that the various observers cannot even agree as to whether Mrs. Dickens was large or small, fat or thin, to say nothing of the more elusive matters of character! In one colorful American description, she is even credited with 'a voluptuous figure.' [86] In later years, it seems clear,

* In 'David Copperfield.'

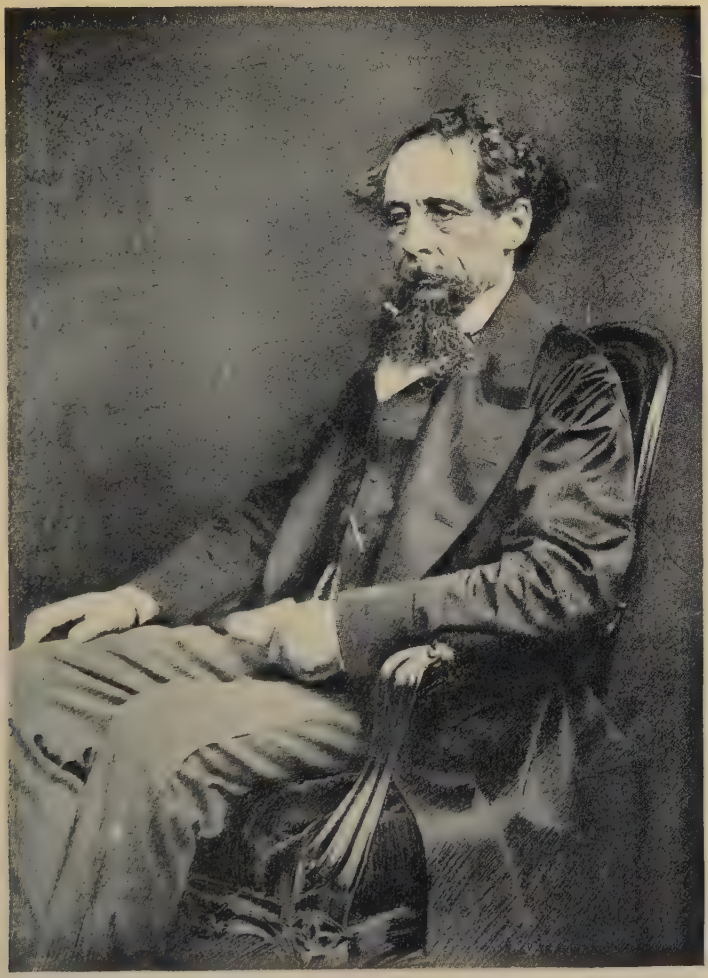
however, she did become very stout. At least, William Edrupt, Dickens's office-boy, said, in 1921, that when she used to come to visit her husband at his office, she could hardly get her crinoline through the door.[87]

Not many of Dickens's letters to his wife have been printed. I can hardly feel that those which have indicate that he was at any time very passionately absorbed in her. He discovered her shortly after he had lost Maria Beadnell, at a time when he was heartsick and lonely, and she came to occupy the place in his life that he had designed for Maria, but she was never more than second choice at best. Mr. Harry B. Smith prints one of Dickens's early (1835) letters to her in 'The Dickens-Kolle Letters,' and comments rightly: 'A man whose letters to friends are always so affectionate could hardly have written more conventionally to the young woman he was on the point of marrying.'

FURNIVAL'S INN
Thursday Night

MY DEAREST KATIE — It is nearly eight, and I have not yet even begun the Sketch; neither have I thought of a subject. Excuse the brevity of this note on that account and believe that it is only occasioned by my wish to see you as early as possible tomorrow.

I send you by George (who, in Fred's absence on business, is kind enough to be the bearer of this) the volume which contains the Life of Savage. I have turned down the leaf. Now *do* read it attentively; if you do, I know from your excellent understanding you will be delighted. If you slur it, you will think it dry. I have written to Macrone for Rookwood; and shall have it here tomorrow, I doubt not.



CHARLES DICKENS, 1869

Give my best love to your mamma and Mary. *Write* me word how all is going on.

Ever yours, my dearest love

CHARLES DICKENS [88]

It is rather different in tone from the letters to Maria — is it not?

As to the intimacy of their relations later, I find a significant bit of testimony in the letter to Forster in which he revealed, for the first and only time, the miserable experiences of his youth in the blacking warehouse: 'I have never, until I now impart it to this paper, in any burst of confidence with any one, *my own wife not excepted*, raised the curtain I then dropped, thank God.' [89]

There are several things like that, it seems to me, where for a moment we are able to lift the curtain that shields Dickens's personal life from prying eyes. Some of the touches seem very slight and inconsiderable, and, save for the later break, would hardly be worth mentioning. As it is, however, they may be not wholly without significance.

I begin as far back as the American tour. From Sandusky, Dickens sends Forster this very diverting essay on Mrs. Dickens as a traveler: 'I say nothing of Kate's troubles — but you recollect her propensity? She falls into, or out of, every coach or boat we enter; scrapes the skin off her legs; brings great sores and swellings on her feet; chips large fragments out of her ankle-bones; and makes herself blue with bruises. She really has, however, since we got over the first trial of being among circumstances so new and so fatiguing, made a *most admirable* traveller in every respect. She has never screamed or expressed alarm under circum-

stances that would have fully justified her in doing so, even in my eyes; has never given way to despondency or fatigue, though we have been travelling incessantly, through a very rough country, for more than a month, and have been at times, as you may readily suppose, most thoroughly tired; and has always accommodated herself, well and cheerfully, to everything; and has pleased me very much, and proved herself perfectly game.' [90]

This is praise, no doubt, but there is a very unpleasant vein of condescension running through it. Dickens was, no doubt, very sympathetic toward Kate's 'propensity,' as he calls it. Only, he works up her ills into a picture marked by the same humorous, grotesque exaggeration he found so effective in his novels. She 'chips large fragments out of her ankle-bones'! And, 'She has never screamed or expressed alarm under circumstances that would have fully justified her in doing so, *even in my eyes*.' On the whole, she has 'pleased' him very much.

When they got to Montreal, there were amateur theatricals, and Mrs. Dickens had a share in them. 'But only think of Kate playing! and playing devilish well, I assure you.' [91] After her name in his annotated copy of the playbill, Dickens wrote eight exclamation points.[92]

There was some condescension on his part, then, even when Kate did what he thought she ought to do. When she failed, there seems to have been something worse than condescension. Her social proclivities irritated him. '. . . Mrs. Dickens is . . . picking up all manner of conditional engagements, and firing me off like a sort of revolver.' [93] Once there was a child's funeral in the neighborhood and Mrs. Dickens wished to attend. But Dickens, who detested

funerals, decided that she shouldn't attend, and she didn't. 'All the women and girls in my house, stark mad on the subject. Despotic conjugal influence exerted to keep Mrs. Dickens out of the church. Caught putting bonnet on for that purpose, and sternly commanded to renounce idiotic intentions.' [94] Once she had her portrait painted without his knowledge. When it arrived, he refused to see the artist at all, and expressed his displeasure with his wife in no uncertain terms.[95] A social occasion reveals a somewhat different type of annoyance: 'A great deal of amusement was excited by Mrs. Charles Dickens perpetrating the most absurd puns, which she did with a charming expression of innocence and deprecation of her husband's wrath; while he tore his hair and writhed as if convulsed in agony.' [96] Here, it seems to me, we find Mrs. Dickens decidedly in the Dora mood. But I am afraid it cannot be maintained that Dickens was quite David at such times, and, though it is carefully explained that on this occasion his wrath was both humorous and simulated, the day was perhaps coming when it would be neither.

At the same time, though Dickens was frequently annoyed by his wife's failure to adjust her mood to his, I do not find that he tried any harder than most men try to adjust his mood to hers. That is to say, he did not try at all. There was much more of him than there was of her — granted. But he was inclined, on occasion, to overlook the fact that her little experience was quite as valid and quite as precious to her as his immensely wider and more splendid experience was to him. He seems to have forgotten, too, that the comparative littleness of Mrs. Dickens was the only hopeful element in their matrimonial experiment, for

Dickens was not the sort of man who could have lived happily with a great woman under any circumstances. The man who marries a great woman, of independent mind and spirit, must either be little enough to be satisfied to live under her domination, or else he must be great enough to be able and willing to adjust himself to another great personality, whose sense of life will, in many respects, differ sharply from his own. Very few men can do that: that is why the marriages of great women so frequently land on the rocks. Dickens's charming sympathy with human weakness is by no means wholly accidental. He was always great enough to dominate: he was not always great enough to coöperate.

Mrs. Cowden Clarke tells in her recollections how once, on an acting tour, in a small-town hotel, Dickens, weary with traveling, improvised a sofa out of four or five chairs, 'on which he stretched himself at full length, resting his head on his wife's knee as a pillow, and was soon in quiet sleep. . . .' [97] A charming picture of domesticity, no doubt. Only, as one interested primarily in Dickens, I should like it somewhat better if I could find some recognition on his part of the possibility that she might be at least equally tired, or some record of his having invited her to lay *her* head on *his* knee. Once he had a disturbing dream. 'Then I awoke, with the tears running down my face. It was just dawn. I called up Kate and repeated it to her three or four times over.' [98] Once he suffered 'a most violent attack of sickness and indigestion which not only prevented me from sleeping, but even from lying down. Accordingly Kate and I sat up through the dreary watches.' [99] Kate and I! And he seems to have taken it quite for granted. Worst of all, it seems to me, is Dickens's evident lack of consideration for his wife at

the time of her ninth confinement. So far as I can see, he was much more interested in getting away to Broadstairs for the summer than he was in taking care of his wife. Apparently he came in to London for the purpose of seeing Dora safely into the world, and then went away again immediately she had arrived. 'Mrs. Dickens being happily confined,' he wrote Wills, 'I go to Broadstairs this afternoon.' [100]

All in all, I cannot help feeling that the relations between Dickens and his wife are beautifully epitomized in that oh! so revealing letter he wrote her upon Dora's death. In perfectly amazing fashion, he combines tender sympathy for her grief with a very evident contempt of her intellectual and spiritual resources:

DEVONSHIRE TERRACE
Tuesday morning, 15th April, 1851

MY DEAREST KATE — Now observe, you must read this letter very slowly and carefully. If you have hurried thus far without quite understanding (apprehending some bad news) I rely on your turning back and reading again. Little Dora, without being in the least pain, is suddenly stricken ill. There is nothing in her appearance but perfect rest — you would suppose her quietly asleep — but I am sure she is very ill, and I cannot encourage myself with much hope of her recovery. I do not (and why should I say I do to you, my dear?) I do not think her recovery at all likely. I do not like to leave home. I can do no good here, but I think it right to stay. You will not like to be away, I know, and I cannot reconcile it to myself to keep you away. Forster, with his usual affection for us, comes down to bring you this letter, and to bring you home, but I cannot close it without

putting the strongest entreaty and injunction upon you to come with perfect composure — to remember what I have often told you, that we never can expect to be exempt, as to our many children from the afflictions of other parents, and that if — if when you come I should have to say to you, 'Our little baby is dead,' you are to do your duty to the rest, and to show yourself worthy of the great trust you hold in them. If you will only read this steadily, I have a perfect confidence in your doing what is right.

Ever affectionately,

CHARLES DICKENS [101]

But I do not wish to leave the impression that the fault was all on Dickens's side. If I seem to emphasize his part of it, it is only because I am writing a psychograph of him and not of her. There was fault on both sides or on neither, depending somewhat on your view of how it is that domestic breaches come about. Dickens himself inclined somewhat to the latter supposition, and in fairness to him, it is necessary that we should place before us his own explanation of the necessity for a separation: 'Poor Catherine and I are not made for each other, and there is no help for it. It is not only that she makes me uneasy and unhappy, but that I make her so too — and much more so. She is exactly what you know, in the way of being amiable and complying, but we are strangely ill-assorted for the bond there is between us. God knows she would have been a thousand times happier if she had married another kind of man, and that her avoidance of this destiny would have been at least equally good for us both. I am often cut to the heart by thinking what a pity it is, for her own sake, that I ever fell in her way; and if

I were sick or disabled tomorrow, I know how sorry she would be, and how deeply grieved myself, to think how we had lost each other. But exactly the same incompatibility would arise, the moment I was well again; and nothing on earth could make her understand me, or suit us to each other. Her temperament will not go with mine. It mattered not so much when we had only ourselves to consider, but reasons have been growing since which make it all but hopeless that we should even try to struggle on. What is now befalling me I have seen steadily coming ever since the days you remember when Mary was born; and I know too well that you cannot, and no one can, help me.' Then, after discussing other matters, he concludes: 'I claim no immunity from blame. There is plenty of fault on my side, I dare say, in the way of a thousand uncertainties, caprices, and difficulties of disposition; but only one thing will alter all that, and that is, the end which alters everything.' [102]

Why? Seventy years have gone by since they parted, and as yet the only safe answer to that question is the answer summed up in the legal phrase — incompatibility of temper. The 'violated letter' suggests some mental derangement on the part of Mrs. Dickens, as does also another letter, quoted in part by Mr. Straus,[103] but one cannot dogmatize on this point. Eleanor Christian and her friends believed that indolence, partly induced by too much child-bearing, was the worst of Mrs. Dickens's faults. Unfortunately, indolence angered and excited Dickens as much as any failing did. Georgina Hogarth, writing Mrs. Winter concerning the break in 1858, explained that 'by some constitutional misfortune and incapacity, my sister always threw her children upon other people, consequently as they grew up, there was

not the usual strong tie between them and her. . . .' [104] I do not believe that Mrs. Dickens lacked affection toward her children: compare the letter she wrote Samuel Rogers concerning them, from America, in 1842. She adds, significantly: 'My impatient husband is hurrying me, as he wishes to put up the parcel, therefore I can only add that I am (etc.)' [105] But unfortunately, in indolent people, the kindliest affection often exists side by side with the most decided neglect in practical affairs.

It was Miss Hogarth herself upon whom the children were thrown, or — as unfriendly observers said — it was Miss Hogarth who, in this particular, usurped her sister's place. Dickens himself was always of the opinion that, if she had not been there, the children would simply have suffered from neglect. Well, Miss Hogarth did not have to bear the children, and Mrs. Dickens did. At the time of the separation, there was much wind in circulation, whispering to the effect that Miss Hogarth had broken up her sister's home. It is sometimes assumed that Mrs. Dickens, for a time at least, believed this. But Mrs. Dickens's avowed partisan, Frith's daughter, Jane E. Panton, records unequivocally that Mrs. Dickens used often to say of Miss Hogarth 'that her presence among "the children" was her one comfort and consolation, and that she wished people who did not know all would not talk.' [106]

Personally, I have no doubt as to the entire purity of Miss Hogarth's motives in the whole affair, yet it is not difficult to see how the finest things in her — her efficiency, her devotion, her entire willingness to devote her life to children that were not her own — must have heightened rather than lowered the domestic tension in the Dickens household. Let

us grant that Mrs. Dickens was indolent and inefficient. It did not tend to increase her satisfaction that her sister was able and energetic, for all that it outwardly helped the wheels of the household to operate somewhat more smoothly.

Were there any other women? I cannot honestly think so. It is here that I most regret the policy of secrecy that the Dickens family and their associates have seen fit to pursue with regard to the whole matter, for it has made possible an unsavory sort of whispering campaign extending clear from 1858 to the present day. Perhaps the loudest whisper is that emanating from Dickens's friend, George Augustus Sala, whose curious notion of keeping a secret was to insert this in his 'Life and Adventures,' published in 1895: 'It was in 1858 that Charles Dickens had some matrimonial troubles. . . . I did not know at the time anything of the rights and wrongs of the matter. I was told all about it not long afterwards; and I may say now, as I said after Dickens's death, the secret was no affair of mine, and that so long as I lived it would never be revealed by me. I should say that, beyond the members of Dickens's own family, there are, now that Wilkie Collins and Edmund Yates are gone, scarcely any custodians of the secret besides myself.' [107] This is enticing and suggestive. Yet it is almost inconceivable that, if there had been any serious offense on Dickens's part, knowledge of it could have been kept wholly from the world for fifty-eight years.

That Dickens was susceptible to the charm of women, especially young women, of course, admits of no dispute, but the particular combination of mawkish sentimentality and manly reverence in his attitude toward them was such that

the temptation to any improper relations must have been slight, indeed. Thus there was the young actress, Ellen Ternan, who is remembered in his will, and of whom Mrs. Dickens seems to have been somewhat jealous,[108] yet not even Mr. Bechhofer Roberts, who plays up Ellen in his Dickens novel, 'This Side Idolatry' — which might more properly have been called, 'Set Down in Malice' — pretends that her relations with Dickens were, essentially, other than innocent.[109] And there was the young musician whom he met in Liverpool on a reading tour, and whom one of his friends finally married. In 1906, the 'London Tribune' got hold of a batch of letters relating to this incident, and much to Sir Henry Fielding Dickens's disgust, printed them under the lurid caption: 'A Romance in the Life of Charles Dickens.' This was objectionable enough, but what happened in America was positively libelous, for here one writer contributed to 'The Bookman' an article purporting to be based on the 'Tribune' letters, but reprinting none of them, and filled with such inaccurate slanders that one wonders whether he had ever read them.[110] The truth of the matter is that Dickens was impressed by this girl in much the same way that many of his readers have been impressed by Little Nell: 'I cannot joke about Miss ——,' he writes, 'for she is too good; and interest in her (spiritual young creature that she is, and destined to an early death, I fear) has become a sentiment with me. Good God! What a madman I should seem if the incredible feeling I have conceived for that girl could be made plain to any one. Well, well. There must be things of this kind in heaven, and some of us are going there faster than we think, perhaps. . . .' When he hears that his friend has fallen in love with her, he writes: 'I swear that

when I opened and read your letter this morning . . . I felt the blood go from my face to I don't know where, and my very lips turn white.' He urged his friend to propose marriage to the young lady at once, even though he had known her only a few days, for 'hours of hers are years in the lives of common women.' As for her delicate health, 'I could say in solemn and religious earnestness that I could bear better her passing from my arms to Heaven, than I could endure the thought of coldly turning off into the world again to see her no more. . . .'[111] On this excellent advice the friend promptly acted and was successful in his suit. The lady, moreover, did not pass from his arms to Heaven, but lived to bless him for many years. This passage in Dickens's life certainly indicates abnormal sensibility, and you may call it foolish and ridiculous if you get any satisfaction out of using those terms in this connection, but to call it a romance is simply to tell a falsehood.

That does not mean, however, that Miss Hogarth was the only woman who helped to accentuate the Dickens matrimonial problem. For there were two other great figures in Dickens's world of the spirit, and each, in her own way, bore down upon the none too certain tie. It does not greatly help any domestic establishment to have the husband passionately cherish ideals of womanhood embodied in a woman who is not his wife. So poor Mary, dead and in her grave these many years, yet alive forever in her brother-in-law's soul, became a factor of some reckoning, no doubt, in the disturbance of her sister's home. 'Of course Mrs. Dickens loved her sister,' says Professor Baker wisely, 'but would any affectionate woman wholly enjoy hearing her husband talk freely of a love for her deceased sister so profound that

he wished to be buried in the same grave with her?' [112] I hasten to add that there is no hint anywhere that Mrs. Dickens was consciously jealous of Mary. But, I submit, she would have had to be rather more than human if she had not, now and then, felt a twinge.

The other woman Mrs. Dickens probably knew nothing whatever about, yet I think Maria Beadnell did enter, to a degree, into the situation. For Maria, after all, was the woman he had wanted to marry, and if, as he said, Dickens sought out Lombard Street nearly every time he went to the city, she must have been, through the years, pretty constantly on his mind. He was always sentimental over the past, and never more so than where this hard little woman was concerned. Whenever Catherine did something that disappointed him, he thought of Maria. Whenever household matters took the wrong turn, he mused over how different it would all have been if he had only married his first love. Add to this the enormous, self-deceptive force of the creative imagination with which Dickens infused this early romance as he reworked it in 'David Copperfield,' and you begin to appreciate the delicacy of the situation. Maria Beadnell ought to have been forgotten by 1835. Instead Dickens mooned about her for half a lifetime, and by the time he was disillusioned, in 1855, it was too late. The mischief was done.

With the details of the separation, we are not, at this moment, concerned. Dickens's financial provision for his wife was generous, and her eldest son remained with her to care for her. It was the scandal, involving Miss Hogarth and Ellen, to which I have already referred, that furiously angered Dickens, and that stung him into printing his

famous 'Personal' statement in 'Household Words,' 12 June, 1858. Over this public discussion of his matrimonial troubles, two and a half generations have shuddered. The enemy of Dickens cites it, even to-day, as the crowning manifestation of his boorish vulgarity, and his friends accept it with many grimaces and the humblest apologies. At the risk of laying myself open to the charge of disgusting commonness, I must admit that both these viewpoints seem to me a little silly. An ugly rumor was in circulation. Dickens felt that it was grossly unfair, not only to him, but to others as well, and, then as always, he was far too conscious of the peculiar, intimate relations existing between his public and himself to allow it to pass unchallenged, or without being branded as it deserved. It is all very well to say that the more dignified course would have been to ignore it. Undoubtedly it would. But there are things in life that are more important than dignity, and a man's moral rating with his contemporaries is one of them. Nor was it simply a question of his pride in his hitherto unsmirched reputation, though undoubtedly that factor entered into it and loomed large. He spoke, not for the benefit of the scandal-mongers, or even to convince those 'greasy-minded,' as Mary Johnston has aptly called them, who rejoice to believe unsubstantiated gossip. He was thinking rather of those hosts and hosts of honest, middle-class Englishmen who loved him and whose homes and lives his books had brightened, those masses of sympathetic hearts who would be troubled by these rumors, and hurt in a dumb, vague sort of a way, wondering whether such terrible charges could be true. He knew that the shadow would fall, for them, not only over him, but over his books, and indeed over the goodness and

the sweetness of life that had been so often reflected in those books. Was Charles Dickens, the high-priest of the home, the best, most genial companion of innocent household joys — was Charles Dickens a hypocrite, an adulterer, a Pecksniff, a Tartuffe? If he were — or if they believed he were — they could, none of them, ever again believe in human nature quite as they had believed in it before. He was, in short, not the kind of celebrity who can afford to let vile gossip go unchallenged, or to enjoy, to profit by the celebrity that it brings. The charges had been made: they must be repelled, and he was the only man who could repel them. Nay, would not silence mean, in a measure, acquiescence? Would he not be giving aid and comfort to the enemy, at the same time deserting his friends? So at least it appeared to him: hence the 'Personal' statement in 'Household Words': 'Those who know me and my nature, need no assurance under my hand that such calumnies are irreconcilable with me, as they are, in their frantic incoherence, with one another. But, there is a great multitude who know me through my writings, and who do not know me otherwise; and I cannot bear that one of them should be left in doubt, or hazard of doubt, through my poorly shrinking from taking the unusual means to which I now resort, of circulating the truth.' It was a dignified but impassioned protest, which it was impossible to read without sensing in it a clean man's horror of the lie that had been put upon him. It must have helped many an Englishman to believe in honesty once more.[113]

There are indications that the break hurt both of them, more perhaps than either would have admitted afterward. With people of sensitiveness and fineness of spirit, the habits of a lifetime cannot be easily disturbed. There was

some bitterness on both sides, and perhaps it was well that there should be, for it is the light, amicable breakings of the marriage tie that are most repulsive, more repulsive even than hate. I am not suggesting that Dickens hated his wife, but they never saw each other after the separation, and she was not summoned when he lay dying, nor did she attend his funeral.[114]

For her, it must have been, in some ways, harder than it was for him. He had the world and his fame and his books. Immediately after the separation he started out on a reading tour, a large part of whose usefulness for him was precisely that it helped him to forget. She had none of these resources. I catch two glimpses of her after the separation, and both are deeply pathetic. 'I well recollect,' records Jane Panton, 'being in a box at the theatre one evening with my mother and Mrs. Dickens: the latter burst into tears suddenly and went back into the box. Charles Dickens had come into the opposite box with some friends, and she could not bear it.' [115] Similarly, Shirley Brooks tells in his diary of his wife calling on Mrs. Dickens, shortly after Dickens's death. 'Describes her as looking well, being calm, and speaking of matters with a certain becoming dignity. Is resolved not to allow Forster, or any other biographer, to allege that she did not make Dickens a happy husband, having letters after the birth of her ninth child, in which Dickens writes like a lover. Her eldest daughter visited her and declared that the separation between *them* had resulted solely from Mary's own self-will. Miss H. (Hogarth) has also visited her — I will not write about this, but the affair is to the honour of Mrs. Dickens's heart.' [116] All I can say is that I should like to see those letters.

Dickens himself said little, after he had, through the famous 'violated letter,' said far too much. He had long been convinced that his marriage was a hopeless failure, and, if he ever regretted afterward having brought it to an end, nobody knew it except himself. Love was behind him, and he gave his attention to other things. But that does not mean that he became cynical about it, or that he ever failed to recognize its beauty in other lives. There is that touching reply to Mrs. Milner Gibson, who invited him to a wedding in 1861, a passage which shows better than anything else could Dickens's feeling about love and his feeling about himself: 'I want to thank you . . . for thinking of me on the occasion, but I feel that I am better away from it. I should really have a misgiving that I was a sort of shadow on a young marriage, and you will understand me when I say so, and no more.' [117]

VI

And that, to the best of my knowledge, ends the story of love in its connection with Charles Dickens. I cannot pretend that I think it especially a happy one.[118] As I have suggested before, the one unclouded element in it comes from Miss Hogarth, and Dickens never really loved her at all. It was she who gave him the care, the devotion, the sympathy which one associates, perhaps too carelessly, with the practical side of domestic life, and he appreciated it, oh! he appreciated it as much as any man could. But alas! it was not love, and nothing on earth could make it love. You may esteem a woman and honor her all you please, and she may work herself to the bone for your comfort — it can never thrill you as you are thrilled when the woman you really love

lifts her little finger for you. Well, Dickens lost the girl he loved. And he lost, too, the girl who seemed to him to symbolize everything that was lovely in womanhood, though it is possible the symbol might never have become so glorious had the inspiration of it remained on earth.

I do not for a moment imply that I wish Dickens had married Maria Beadnell. He himself was fully aware, in the parallel case of David and Dora, that death was the only way out. Had Dora lived, David must in time inevitably have outgrown her completely, as he was already beginning to outgrow her. Indeed, she herself fully realizes these things in those last moments of her life, when she accepts her destiny with something closely approaching an heroic resignation. And there is not one iota of evidence to show that Maria had anything like Dora's sweetness of disposition, or Dora's capacity for love, or Dora's tragic, helpless recognition of her own faults. No, if he had married her, the end must inevitably have been the same, and it would have been all the more bitter, simply because the dream had been higher and there had been more love there to start with.

Charles Dickens was not an amorous man. Passion is one of the last things you connect with his name, and, in spite of those ten children, its rôle in his life cannot be considered large. He never slighted it or scorned it, though, if he had, he might surely have felt that it had abundantly revenged itself upon him in the end. 'Why is it,' he writes Forster pathetically and a little self-pityingly, when the separation is imminent, 'that as with poor David, a sense comes always crushing on me now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made?' [119]

George Bernard Shaw has said that the fierce passion of love in its intensest form — love as Romeo and Juliet knew it, or Tristan and Isolde — 'is an experience which it is much better, like the vast majority of us, never to have passed through, than to allow it to play more than a recreative holiday part in our lives.' Dickens never knew that sort of love, nor did he find that higher, finer, calmer love, that sense of union with the soul that was made for yours and completes it and crowns it and reveals it to itself, which Shelley sought so long without finding, which Byron sought without even knowing what he was seeking, and which Browning did find and cherished. It was simply one of the things that life did not give the man Charles Dickens.

Well, love is not all there is to life, and he knew it well, and accepted what he had, joyfully, and was not more disposed to complain than most of us are over what he had missed. Yet love was the bitterest thing in his life, after all, and it was love that made him old before his time.

CHAPTER VII

SPEECH OF THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

As a subject for psychography, Dickens has one very great handicap in the fact that he was completely a normal human being. In many quarters, too, the trend of interest in matters biographical being what it is just now, the entire decency of his life would be felt as a serious drawback. Undoubtedly there is considerable spice and color that must be sacrificed along this line. Mr. Ley has recently declared: 'I am aware of nothing in his life — and he lived in the limelight as no other man of letters has done — which those who loved him best need wish to conceal.' [1] This is a bold statement, and there is probably no man who has ever lived, except One, of whom it could truly be made without any qualification whatever. Yet Mr. Straus, who is perhaps, on the whole, somewhat less sympathetic than Mr. Ley, and who has had access to much unpublished material, goes nearly as far when he says that, so far as he knows, Dickens was never 'guilty of any action whatsoever which could not be told in detail to-day.' [2]

This is not to say that there never was a serious charge made against Dickens by anybody. It was inevitable that a man so much in the public eye as he was should be gossiped about occasionally, for there are no untouched reputations in the world except those belonging to people who never were important enough to make it interesting for any of their contemporaries to tell lies about them. The allegations against Dickens which accompanied his separation from his

wife have already been discussed, and I hope their essential hollowness has been indicated.

It is clear, to be sure, and from Dickens's own testimony, that he knew the seamy side of London life. Even as a boy, he cherished a passion for Seven Dials, and this interest certainly did not tend to diminish as he grew older. Occasionally he seems to have gone slumming in search of relief from the nervous strain of his work:[3] more often he was led simply by curiosity. Only, his experience would seem always to have been that of the observer, not of the participant, and James T. Fields bears convincing testimony to his Christian manliness in the slumming expeditions upon which he accompanied him. He carried the same spirit across the water to America. 'I was out half the night in New York with two of their most famous constables; started at midnight, and went into every brothel, thieves' house, murdering hovel, sailors' dancing place, and abode of villainy, both black and white, in the town.'[4] I do not say that Dickens went into the underworld *merely* as a writer in search of copy. That would make his attitude much colder, much more professional than it really was. For he had a vast curiosity about human life — all human life. He wanted to see, to observe, to understand as much of it as possible, and doubtless would have done so, in a measure, even if he had not been a professional writer. But I find few suggestions that his curiosity ever led his feet into dubious ways.

I

The first charge which the Devil's Advocate makes against Dickens is that he ate and drank more than was good for

him. This is partly because of the comparatively large rôle that food and drink play in his books, for there is no overlooking the gusto with which Dickens characters relish the joys of the table.[5] I confess I have never felt this element in Dickens's work as wholly to his discredit, and I have no patience whatever with those comfortable, well-fed parlor idealists who — themselves never having once gone hungry in their lives — yet feel their lovely sensibilities outraged by Dickens's descriptions of the thankful greediness with which they devour a good meal to whom it is not, by any means, the ordinary or the everyday thing. Food, air, light, and sleep — these are the commonest, yet the greatest blessings of life, and we are all prone to accept them carelessly, as a matter of course, until, in some contingency, one or another of them is taken away from us. That there are human beings in the world who have never had their fair share of any of them is an unpleasant fact about which we do not permit ourselves to think too often. Well — Dickens thought of it all the time, the hardships of his own youth having provided him with a key to unlock the sorrows of all the outcasts of the world.

With reference to Dickens's own drinking habits, I shall present my findings in some detail. It is only fair to report at the outset, however, that while I find numerous potations, there is no evidence whatever for habitual dissipation or for the association in any way of drinking with vice. In all the Dickens records that have been available to me, I catch but five suggestions of tipsiness.

The first is as early as 1833, just before Kolle's marriage. 'By the by, if I had many friends in the habit of marrying, which friends had brothers who possessed an extensive as-

sortment of choice hock, I should be dead in no time. Yesterday I felt like a maniac, to-day my interior resembles a lime basket.'[6] Next, in 1837, he writes Wilkie Collins: 'If you can think of any tremendous way of passing the night, in the mean time, do. I don't care what it is. I give (for that night only) restraint to the Winds!'[7] Then, in 1838, Macready records having seen Dickens, Blanchard, and Cruikshank, 'who seemed set for a booze in Forster's study.' Again, in a letter of January 2, 1844, Dickens refers plainly to what must have been a very wet New Year's Eve: 'Yesterday morning, New Year's Day, when I walked into my little workroom after breakfast, and was looking out of window at the snow in the garden — not seeing it particularly well in consequence of some staggering suggestions of last night, whereby I was beset — the postman came to the door with a knock, for which I denounced him from my heart.'[8] Finally, as late as 1854, he writes his sister-in-law: 'Last night I was drinking gin-slings till daylight, with Buckstone of all people, who saw me looking at the Spanish dancers, and insisted on being convivial.'[9]

It is possible, of course, that there is considerable evidence for dissipation on Dickens's part that has not yet been printed. Yet I hardly think this sort of thing would have been deliberately withheld. Two of the citations just given are from the official collection of the Letters, edited by his sister-in-law and his eldest daughter, and another is from Wilkie Collins, who, if Dickens were dissipated, might surely have been expected to know about it. Also, the very tone of the sentences I have quoted shows that they refer to clearly exceptional happenings.

Moreover, we have on this matter the testimony of

several men and women who saw Dickens frequently and informally, and who could have had no motive for withholding the truth. All of them admit that the idea of drink stimulated Dickens's imagination. Thus our own Longfellow records in his diary the account given by one of the members of the Saturday Club of Dickens brewing a pitcher of gin punch. 'No witch at her incantation could be more rapt than Dickens was in his as he stooped over the drink he was making.' [10] But nearly all these witnesses record also that when it came to drinking the punch, or whatever else it was that might be on the board, then Dickens was distinctly temperate.

From this view I find, indeed, only one strenuously dissenting voice, and since this belongs to an otherwise unidentified 'Amanuensis' who once unburdened himself in a periodical called 'Tit-Bits,' I am not disposed to worry about it too much. 'Amanuensis' says of Dickens: 'He was a great eater; not an epicure, but a gourmand. He ate, and ate, and ate, and cared little for quality, so there was enough before him.' Again: 'I never saw him drunk myself. I have seen him several times exhilarated, however. He only drank the best of wine, but he drank that very freely.' Finally: 'He was an insatiable cigarette-smoker, and when dictating to me always had a cigarette in his mouth.' [11]

But let us hear the other witnesses.

In 'My Father as I Recall Him,' Miss Mamie Dickens speaks of the large rôle of eating and drinking in Dickens's books, and concludes her remarks on the subject by saying, '. . . I think no more abstemious man ever lived.' [12] George Dolby, who managed the American reading tour and was with Dickens continually during that time, says that '. . . al-

though he so frequently both wrote and talked about eating and drinking, I have seldom met with a man who partook less freely of the kindly fare set before him.'[13] Edmund Yates, who saw him often in London, testified that for luncheon he generally took little but bread and cheese and a glass of ale.[14] William Edrupt, his office-boy, remembered in after years that Dickens often sent him out to fetch ices, 'of which he ate considerable, though he ate very lightly of everything else.'[15] Thomas Wooley, his garden-boy at Gadshill, recalled that most of the wine and spirits sent to Dickens by friendly admirers went into the Kentish cottages near by, especially in times of illness.[16] James T. Fields declared unequivocally: 'And here let me say, that although he was accustomed to talk and write a great deal about eating and drinking, I have rarely seen a man eat and drink less. He liked to dilate in imagination over the brewing of a bowl of punch, but I always noticed that when the punch was ready, he drank less of it than any one who might be present. It was the sentiment of the thing and not the thing itself that engaged his attention.'[17] Mrs. Fields is equally emphatic: 'The idea of his ever passing the bounds of temperance is an idea not to be thought of for a moment.'[18] Finally, his brother-in-law, the pious Henry Burnett, says: 'Never once could I call to mind a single instance of his having dulled his brain or made his tongue speak foolishly by such a vice. When sustaining the position of Chairman with its enticing duties he very frequently had by his right hand his own decanter of toast and water; with this he toasted.'[19] There is another interesting reference to water-drinking in an unpublished letter to Marryat: 'Stanfield tells me you have taken to drinking cold water in the morning. So have

I. One of our pumps is dry, and the other drying, I drink so much of it.' [20]

I think we must conclude Dickens to have been a temperate man. Miss Dickens and Dolby and Yates and Mr. and Mrs. Fields were not all liars. *Only* — and that *only* covers a good deal — we must remember that we are dealing with a time when a somewhat wider latitude was considered to lie within the boundaries of temperance than is the case to-day. Consider Howard Paul's description of the 'simple, homely dinner' with which Dickens regaled him at Broadstairs: 'There were oysters from Whitstable, a sole browned to a turn, a roast leg of mutton snatched from the fire at the auspicious moment, the bone of which had been removed, and the space supplied with oysters and veal stuffing.' [21] Again, there is Franklin Philip's account of a day in Dickens's house: 'On arrival (half-past twelve), commenced with "cider cup," which had previously been ordered to be ready for us — delicious cooling drink — cider, soda-water, sherry, brandy, lemon-peel, sugar, and ice, flavored with an herb called burrage, all judiciously mixed. Lunch at one o'clock, completed by a liquor which Dickens said was "peculiar to the house." From two to half-past five we were engaged in a large open meadow at the back of the house, in the healthful and *intellectual* employment of playing "Aunt Sally" and rolling balls on the grass; at half-past three, interval for "cool brandy and water"; at half-past six o'clock we dined — young Charles Dickens, and a still younger Charles Dickens (making three generations), having arrived in the mean time — dinner faultless, wines irreproachable; nine to ten, billiards, ten to eleven, music in the drawing-room; eleven, "hot and rebellious liquors," delightfully com-

pounded into punches; twelve, to bed.'[22] Just what Mr. Paul's idea of a rich, heavy dinner would have been, I am not prepared to say — nor Mr. Philip's notion of how much liquor one might drink and still not pass the bounds of temperance, but it is evident at least that we are not dealing with a pernickety day.

Spirituous refreshment, then, was a part of Dickens's life, quite as much a part of it as food itself. And doubtless, like many men who drink regularly and habitually, he became able in the course of time to consume what would seem to many of us large quantities of liquor without being upset or excited by it. Harry B. Smith comments rightly on the Kolle Letters that some of them 'indicate much cigar smoking, and a little too much drinking for a youth of eighteen.'[23] In St. Louis, in 1842, when he was entertained at a supper where no liquor was served, he thought it worth making a note of.[24] And there is much implied in his letter of September 3, 1837, where, speaking of a recent illness, he says, 'I am much better, and hope to begin *Pickwick* No. 18 to-morrow. You will imagine how queer I must have been when I tell you that I have been compelled for four-and-twenty mortal hours to abstain from porter or other malt-liquor!!! I done it though — really. . . .'[25] What a deprivation! What magnificent self-control!

But the most disgusting of all Dickens's drinking passages are those which involve drinking by children. That he himself 'partook' at a tender age, we know from the famous public-house adventure which he reworked in 'David Copperfield,'[26] and it seems never to have occurred to him that drinking by children was objectionable in any way. That amazing fact serves, I suppose, simply to point the difference

between two ages. In Dickens's day, even the severest moralist was not likely to claim any more than that *immoderate* drinking was harmful and therefore immoral. In our own, thanks to the demonstrations of science, no drinking of any sort has a moral leg to stand on. Dickens was about the last man in the world who would have wished to corrupt or in any way to harm a child, yet beer is virtually the first thing Dick Swiveller gives the Marchioness, and W. R. Hughes has preserved the account of how Dickens himself refreshed a sixteen-year-old boy who came to call on him with two glasses of wine.[27] How innocent all this seemed to Dickens and his friends may be gathered from two rather amazing instances. The first is a letter he wrote to a child friend, Mary Talfourd, shortly before his first American excursion, declining a birthday invitation from her: 'But although I cannot come to see you on that day, you may be sure I shall not forget that it is your birthday, and that I shall drink your health and many happy returns in a glass of wine, filled as full as it will hold. And I shall dine at half-past five myself, so that we may both be drinking our wine at the same time; and I shall tell my Mary (for I have got a daughter of that name but she is a very small one as yet) to drink your health too. . . .'[28] The other incident is recorded by Canon Ainger, who tells without a qualm how that once, on the occasion of some amateur theatricals at Tavistock House, Dickens brewed punch between the acts, 'but "craftily qualified," as Michael Cassio would have said, to suit the capacities of the childish brain, for Dickens never forgot the *maxima reverentia* due to children, and some of us were of very tender age. . . .'[29] The natural climax to all this is reached in 'Master Humphrey's Clock,' in the account

of old Weller's carrying-on with his infant grandson: 'It was half-past nine o'clock when Mr. Weller was last seen carrying him home upon his shoulder, and it has been whispered abroad that at that time the infant Tony was rather intoxicated.' [30]

Yet, for all his kindness toward convivial drinking, one must admit that the vice of drunkenness received abundant denunciation from Dickens. The point seems to be just here: drinking as an act of good-fellowship appealed to him — hence the kindly pictures of tavern life in 'Barnaby Rudge' and 'Great Expectations' — but solitary drinking, for its own sake, interested him much less. Sometimes the evil of drunkenness is presented half-humorously in his novels, as in the case of Mrs. Gamp or of Dick Swiveller. Sometimes the presentation is fantastic, as at Krook's death from spontaneous combustion. Sometimes it appears with the full power of its devastation, as in Joe Gargery's father, in Sydney Carton, or in 'The Stroller's Tale' in 'Pickwick.' Drinking by women appears in Flora Finching, where it is one of the elements in Arthur Clennam's disillusion,[31] and fondness for the bottle is involved also in the hypocrisy of Mr. Pecksniff. In the 'Sketches by Boz,' drink is denounced as 'that fierce rage for the slow, sure poison, that oversteps every other consideration; that casts aside wife, children, friends, happiness and station; and hurries its victim madly on to degradation and death.' [32] In 'Our Mutual Friend,' there is a picture of Jenny Wren's drunken father 'in his worse than swinish state (for swine at least fatten on their guzzling, and make themselves good to eat). . . .' [33]

It is somewhat surprising — at least it would be if the human animal were not noted for his inconsistency — that,

feeling the degradation of drunkenness as clearly as these passages imply, Dickens should yet ridicule the temperance movement every chance he gets. 'Temperance hotels' receive only contempt in the 'American Notes,' [34] and in 'The Uncommercial Traveller' he criticizes a very praiseworthy Whitechapel Cooking Depot because, forsooth, it does not serve the workingmen beer with their meals! [35] He seems to recognize instinctively that already the scientists are coming to be the real enemies of his sentimental attitude toward liquor, and in 'The Wreck of the Golden Mary,' he permits himself a fling at them: 'I know how learnedly it can be shown that rum is poison, but I know also that in this case, as in all similar cases I have ever read of — which are numerous — no words can express the comfort and support derived from it.' [36] In plain English, what the argument amounts to is this: we should continue the liquor traffic so that persons cast away on the high seas may not, by any chance, be deprived of the blessings of rum!

In every instance where Dickens specifically faces the subject of total abstinence, he skillfully begs the question. In 'The Pickwick Papers,' he seems to feel he has disposed of it when he has shown that Stiggins, the temperance advocate, is himself a furtive drinker. In 'The Uncommercial Traveller,' he describes a temperance parade, and decides against tne cause on the ground that some of the participants abused their horses — *ergo*, they were intemperate! [37] In the 'Household Words' paper called 'Whole Hogs' he evades the issue again: 'A man, to be truly temperate, must be temperate in many respects — in the rejection of strong words no less than of strong drinks. . . .' [38] In another essay he declares that, though he detests drunkenness, he

cannot consent to see the public treated as if it were a great baby.[39]

In one respect, however, it must be granted that Dickens's penetration on the temperance question was more profound than that of many of the temperance advocates. His notion that excessive drinking always begins in sorrow, in poverty, or in ignorance is — I am afraid — a pretty piece of romancing,[40] but there is no question but that he was right in his conviction that the social causes of drunkenness run far back of the gin shop.[41] 'Hogarth avoided the Drunkard's Progress, I conceive, precisely because the causes of drunkenness among the poor were so numerous and widely spread, and lurked so sorrowfully deep and far down in all human misery, neglect, and despair, that even *his* pencil could not bring them fairly and justly into the light.' [42]

In passing, we may glance for a moment at some of the things that usually go along with drinking. Though Dickens smoked somewhat (probably not nearly so much as 'Amanuensis' would have us believe), the weed is not nearly so ubiquitous in his work as the bottle, and Donald G. Mitchell assures us that he never smoked while writing.[43] He was not insensitive to the filthiness of smoking. In 'Bleak House' he describes Mr. Turveydrop's dwelling as 'quite a fine house once, when it was anybody's business to keep it clean and fresh, and nobody's business to smoke in it all day.' [44] In the sketch, 'Bill-Sticking,' there is a general disclaimer on the subject of smoking which may, in a measure, apply to Dickens himself, where the 'I' of the narrative declares that 'unmitigated tobacco produces most disturbing effects upon my system,' and doubts whether, if he had perfect moral courage, he would smoke at all.[45]

There is little evidence for other habits of this kind. In very early youth, Dickens's *clerical* schoolmaster, Mr. Giles, taught him to use snuff, but he soon abandoned the habit. As for gambling, he always set his face steadily against the vice, and he rarely speaks of it without condemnation.

Not until toward the end of his life does it appear that Dickens consciously and definitely used liquor as a stimulant. Then, under the cruel strain of his readings, he began to do so. From Liverpool he wrote home in 1866: 'A dozen oysters and a little champagne between the parts every night, seem to constitute the best restorative I have ever yet tried.' [46] But Dickens was a sick man by 1866, and a dozen oysters and a little champagne did not suffice for long. His illnesses and his indulgences alike reached their climax in America, and, after reading the following passage, I do not know whether to feel that he finished his tour because of stimulants or in spite of them: 'I cannot eat (to anything like the necessary extent) and have established this system: at 7 in the morning, in bed, a tumbler of new cream and two tablespoonfuls of rum. At 12, a sherry cobbler and a biscuit. At 3 (dinner time) a pint of Champagne. At five minutes past 8 an egg beaten up with a glass of sherry. Between the parts, the strongest beef tea that can be made, drunk hot. At a quarter past 10, soup, and any little thing to drink that I can fancy. I do not eat more than half a pound of solid food in the whole four-and-twenty hours, if so much.' [47]

Moreover, it was during the American tour that Dickens came finally to the place where liquor alone would no longer serve him. Although his close friend, Wilkie Collins, had long been using drugs freely,[48] I find no indication that Dickens himself employed them before this time. He took

laudanum, for the first time apparently, on March 28, 1868, for the next day we find him writing his daughter: 'Last night here I took some laudanum, and it is the only thing that has done me good.' [49] Mrs. Fields refers to the remedy a little later and says that it had a bad effect on Dickens's temper.[50] Dolby does not mention Dickens's use of laudanum, though it is plainly laudanum which explains the phenomenon to which he does refer — that after a sick and miserable day, Dickens could go on the platform at night and deliver a reading, apparently fresh and in the best of health. It should be added that the use of drugs was never more than an emergency measure with Dickens, though I find one reference to it after his return to England.[51]

In leaving this matter of Dickens's drinking, it would be very unfair to judge him by any other standards than those of his own day. In that time, a nursing mother like Mrs. Kenwigs used to fortify her spirit with four pints of malt liquor in a day, and while of course this is burlesque, the mere fact that this particular specimen of burlesque occurred to Dickens shows something. It is rather amusing to find him looking back with horror upon the drinking habits of the eighteenth century, much as we look back upon those of his own day: 'Those were drinking days, and most men drank hard. So very great is the improvement Time has brought about in such habits, that a moderate statement of the quantity of wine and punch which one man would swallow in the course of a night, without any detriment to his reputation as a perfect gentleman, would seem, in these days, a ridiculous exaggeration.' [52] You would almost think he was talking about 'The Pickwick Papers' — would you not? Dickens's theories on the liquor question have now been

shown to be entirely wrong, but there is no denying that living as he did, and when he did, he was a man of self-control.

II

Dickens is also accused of vulgarity. Interpreting the word in its etymological sense, he would not, indeed, have felt this as a reproach. Like our own Mark Twain, he was of the people, he wrote for the people, he tested life by the standards that they could understand. As for the fastidious, he had no use for them, no desire to secure their approval, any more than Mark had. 'I have no respect for their opinion, good or bad; do not covet their approval; and do not write for their amusement. I venture to say this without reserve; for I am not aware of any writer in our language having a respect for himself, or held in any respect by his posterity, who ever has descended to the taste of this fastidious class.' [53] In this sense, Dickens's vulgarity is his strength. He could never have become the writer he is if he had written for a class, or if he had tested human values by the standards of any one group rather than by those of the people at large.

Unfortunately, however, there went with this glorious primary vulgarity, as there so often does, some vulgarity of the secondary offensive sort which is mere commonness and lack of distinction. The loud flamboyancy of Dickens's dress, especially in the earlier years, has already been described. Even Porter, the Kentucky giant mentioned in the 'American Notes,' felt that the great writer was loud in this respect. 'He had a double gold chain outside his waistcoat, and such breastpins, that I thought he looked like one of our

river gamblers.'[54] A very different kind of observer, Mrs. Carlyle, went to dinner at his house in 1849 and found it tasteless in the extreme. 'Such getting up of the steam is unbecoming to a literary man who *ought* to have his basis elsewhere than on what the old Armandale woman called "Ornament and grander." The dinner was served up in the new fashion — not placed on the table at all — but handed round — only the dessert on the table and quantities of *artificial* flowers — but such an overloaded dessert! pyramids of figs raisins oranges — och! At the Ashburton dinner served on those principles there were just *four cowslips* in china pots — four silver shells containing sweets, and a silver filigree temple in the middle! but here the very candles rose each out of an artificial rose!'[55] And another guest tells us that Dickens sometimes placed mirrors at the end of the dinner-table, so that the whole scene might be reflected.[56]

All in all, there are a fair number of social blunders recorded to Dickens's credit. I do not mean by that that he used the wrong fork at a banquet. Such technical matters do not in any way afford a test of gentlemanly instincts: they simply illustrate humanity's bondage to convention. 'Good Lord!' thinks Nicholas Nickleby, struck into admiration of the benevolence of the Cheeryble brothers, 'and there are scores of people of their own station . . . who wouldn't ask these men to dinner because they eat with their knives, and never went to school!'[57] There are other things, however. Thus there is the delightful story of the time when Dickens and his wife dined with John Quincy Adams. The hour was half-past two on a Sunday afternoon. 'They came, he in a frock coat, and she in her bonnet. They sat at table until four o'clock, when he said, "Dear, it is time for us

to go home and dress for dinner." They were engaged to dine with Robert Greenhow at the fashionable hour of half-past five.'[58] And there is that other story over which generations of Bostonians have shuddered — that he once combed his hair at a Boston dinner-table.[59]

Boston seems, indeed, to have been shocked by Dickens's unconventionality on more than one occasion. Once, when a discussion arose as to the respective claims of two ladies to the proud name of beauty, Dickens declared: 'Well, I don't know, Mrs. Norton perhaps is the most beautiful; but the duchess, to my mind, is the more kissable person.'[60] On his second visit, he told Mrs. Fields 'that no ballet dancer could have pretty feet, and one dreadful thing was they could never wash them, as water renders the feet tender and they must become horny.'[61] Once, when Charles Eliot Norton visited him in England, Dickens thought it proper to hold forth with great amusement on the superlative ugliness of Lewes and George Eliot. 'They really are the ugliest couple in London,' he said.[62]

Maunsell B. Field tells one almost incredible story of savage bad temper on Dickens's part, relating to an occasion when a stranger referred to having met him before in a certain place. Dickens glared at him and replied, 'I never was there in my life.' The interlocutor persisted. 'I tell you, sir, I never was there in my life.' Here Mrs. Dickens interposed: 'Why, Charles, you certainly were there, and I was with you; don't you remember the occurrence?' Then, 'Mr. Dickens glared at her almost fiercely, and advancing a step or two, with his right hand raised, fairly shouted, "I tell you, I never was there in my life!"'[63] Eleanor Christian tells other stories which are almost as bad.[64]

Dickens is celebrated — and justly — for the purity of his imagination and the purity of his humor. Charles Kent's story of what happened one day when he and the novelist were caught in a traffic jam and heard a reprobate scream some appalling obscenity, is very illustrative in this connection. 'It was preëminently characteristic of his whole nature, as it seemed to me, that any one observing his imperturbable face while the words were being uttered and his dumb silence in their regard afterwards, must have pronounced him stone deaf to all that had occurred.' [65] Percy Fitzgerald has, indeed, recorded that, one day during a railroad journey, Dickens regaled him with almost a score of racy stories, but if we are to judge the lot by the one he prints, surely they might almost have been related in Sunday School.[66] Once in this connection, Dickens bears witness against himself, when, describing some rather coarse women into whose company he was thrown at Geneva, he says, 'Still, but for Kate and Georgy (who were decidedly in the way, as we agreed afterwards), I should have thought it all very funny; and, as it was, I threw the ball back again, was mighty free and easy, made some rather broad jokes, and was highly applauded.' [67] I am not sure those jokes were very broad, though I have no doubt he thought they were.

Recently, to be sure, Mr. Straus has called attention to the fact that in the later years, Wilkie Collins was not exactly a high-minded influence in Dickens's life. Even in the printed correspondence with that gentleman there are suggestions that one does not often find elsewhere in Dickens, and the suggestions are strengthened considerably by the unpublished letters from which Mr. Straus quotes. Lest rash conclusions be drawn from this statement, I hasten to

quote the very fair, and, as I see it, very apt deduction which Mr. Straus himself has made: 'It seems to me that Collins was providing the over-wrought man with a rougher, slightly more cynical philosophy. Collins liked to do himself well; he enjoyed the little adventures in which a man of not too scrupulous taste will sometimes indulge. I do not say that he led Dickens astray; but after Forster's starchified and ultra-respectable ways it must have been a relief to have somebody about you at once capable of holding his own in intellectual argument and not unwilling to be pleasantly vulgar on occasions.' [68] That is as far as we can go. But it must have caused some soreness of spirit to John Forster, in the last years of Dickens's life, to find this vulgarian challenging his place as Dickens's closest friend.

What is offensive in Dickens along this line, however, is the frequency of his flippant references to pregnancy. I say nothing here of Mrs. Gamp's remarks, for these are thoroughly in character and a necessary element of a wonderful characterization, nor yet of Toots's continual pleading with Susan not to exert herself lest something should happen which might prove fatal to her hopes.[69] But there are plenty of passages for which no such defense can be made. To quote them all here would be both tiresome and offensive. I give what is necessary to make the point: the curious will find further references among the notes.

First, the novels. Of the Veneerings it is recorded that 'they were as newly married as was lawfully compatible with their having a bran-new baby.' [70] When Mr. Dombey leaves the dressing-room, the women on the staircase whisk away in all directions, 'except Mrs. Perch, who, being (but that she always is) in an interesting condition, is not nimble,

and is obliged to face him, and is ready to sink with confusion as she curtseys; — may Heaven avert all evil consequences from the house of Perch!' [71] In 'Hard Times,' Sissy Jupe takes refuge 'on the bosom of the most accomplished tight-rope lady (herself in the family-way), who knelt down on the floor to nurse her, and to weep over her.' [72] And in 'Martin Chuzzlewit' there is an unpardonable smart reference to labor, all the more inexplicable as coming from a man generally so sensitive to suffering as Dickens was :'It chanced on this particular occasion, that Mrs. Gamp had been up all the previous night, in attendance upon a ceremony to which the usage of gossips has given that name which expresses, in two syllables, the curse pronounced on Adam.' [73]

In private life the tone is much the same. 'I am bidden to a wedding,' he writes Macready, '(where fathers are made) . . .' [74] When he went to Verona, he saw nothing to remind him of 'Romeo and Juliet' 'but a very unsentimental middle-aged lady . . . who resembled old Capulet in the one particular of being very great indeed in the family way.' [75] In the same vein he writes to a friend: 'We all hope to hear shortly that Mrs. Bicknell has recovered that other little accident, which (as you and I know) will occasionally happen in well-regulated families.' [76] In 1847, he revived Mrs. Gamp, in an unfinished sketch (printed by Forster), in which she is represented as having attached herself to Dickens's company of actors on their 'splendid strolling' tour, because she has heard that several of the ladies of the company are at that time in various stages of an interesting condition — a particularly bald joke, this, at the expense of a group of ladies who were Dickens's personal friends. Once

I thought Eleanor Christian had furnished the climax of this phase of my story with her account of the time when Dickens created havoc among the ladies by insisting on singing to the tune of 'The King of the Cannibal Islands' various comic songs about the approaching confinement of the Queen![77] Lest any one should doubt Mrs. Christian's testimony, I must add that Dickens himself far and away surpasses it, in a letter to George Cattermole, written at a time when the birth of one of Cattermole's children was imminent: 'I was going to let off a tremendous joke about the new number coming out by and by resplendently "in parts" (you perceive the subtle point?) when my spirits were dashed and my intention balked by your not having told me the sex — which was absolutely necessary to the elaboration of the idea.'[78]

When Kate Field heard Dickens read in Boston, she judged that he was 'never more a gentleman than in dealing with passages that are capable of being vulgarly construed.'[79] I am afraid I cannot say the same with regard to the passages I have just transcribed. Here he seems to me distinctly adolescent. And one cannot help remembering, as one reads these things, that Mrs. Dickens, who bore ten children, was in just this condition that somehow seemed so amusing to her husband during a fairly large share of their married life. Many of these passages must have been written while she was pregnant, and her husband can hardly have avoided thinking of her as he wrote them. Just what is the bearing of all this, I wonder, on Dickens's married life? Did his wife's fertility somehow arouse his contempt? Did she bring forth children so easily that he never appreciated or understood what the agony is for some women? Or was he,

like so many men, simply callous to every phase of sex life except sensual pleasure? Whatever the answer, these are the most unsympathetic passages in his work.

III

Again, it is said, Dickens had too much of the autocrat in his temper, and he tended always to dominate any group into which he came. His best friends and warmest admirers admit that there is a certain justice in this charge. Like most men of strong personality, he had much rather lead than follow, and charming and conciliatory and winning though he could be, he was most likely to be all these things when his authority was not disputed. Forster recognized in him this 'stern and even cold isolation of self-reliance side by side with a susceptivity almost feminine and the most eager craving for sympathy,' and attributed both to the hardships of his early life. 'His early sufferings brought with them the healing powers of energy, will, and persistence, and taught him the inexpressible value of a determined resolve to live down difficulties; but the habit, in small as in great things, of renunciation and self-sacrifice, they did not teach; and, by his sudden leap into world-wide popularity and influence, he became master of everything that might seem to be attainable in life, before he had mastered what a man must undergo to be equal to its hardest trials.' [80] Even Mary Boyle, who adored him, speaks of him as 'the only despot I ever tolerated,' [81] and Edmund Yates, though testifying to the kindest personal treatment, declares: 'The society in which he mixed, the hours which he kept, the opinions which he held, his likes and dislikes, his ideas of what should or should not be, were all settled by himself,

not merely for himself, but for all those brought into connection with him, and it was never imagined they could be called in question.' [82]

It does not seem that Dickens's leadership was exercised generally in anything like a harsh or a violent way. Thus Mary Cowden-Clarke, referring to his dictatorship in theatrical matters: 'With all this supervision, however, it was pleasant to remark the utter absence of dictatorialness or arrogation of superiority that distinguished his mode of ruling his troop: he exerted his authority firmly and perpetually; but in such a manner as to make it universally felt to be for no purpose of self-assertion or self-importance; on the contrary, to be for the sole purpose of ensuring general success to their united efforts.' [83] Many others say substantially the same thing, whether they are speaking of theatrical affairs or of something else. But that he did assert his authority is nevertheless clear, clearer even in the indirect testimony than in the direct. Take, for example, his dislike of argument; and consequent refusal to discuss a question: 'He hates argument; in fact, he is unable to argue — a common case with impulsive characters who see the whole, and feel it crowding and struggling at once for immediate utterance.' [84]

Dickens was autocrat, too, as an editor and in his dealings with his illustrators. Here again, there is no evidence of lack of considerateness — but simply of a clear-headed determination to get just what he wanted. The matter of the illustrators has been studied in detail by Kitton, and the minuteness of Dickens's directions is sometimes amazing. It is clear that in some cases the artist failed to grasp Dickens's idea; in others his distress and dissatisfaction seem gro-

tesquely exaggerated. Generally, in such contingencies, the novelist did not suggest the extremity of his discontent to the artist in question. 'One cut of Doyle's and one of Leech's I found so unlike my ideas, that I had them both to breakfast with me this morning, and with that winning manner which you know of, got them with the highest good humour to do both afresh.' [85] Phiz was much hurt, however, when, after he had been so long identified with the illustration of Dickens's books, the novelist suddenly dropped him without a word of explanation. There was no animus on Dickens's part in connection with this, but it was not a considerate action. Kitton shows, too, that Phiz was underpaid for his work, for the not inconsiderable contribution which he made to Dickens's success. This is not a matter in which Dickens was directly responsible, but he can hardly have been without influence.

As an editor, Dickens consciously ran a one-man journal. 'Dickens is the Sultan,' said Thackeray, 'and Wills is his Grand Vizier.' [86] When a paper came in that contradicted his views, he rejected it. When he felt that revision on his part would improve an accepted contribution, he revised it. Sometimes, to be sure, he ran into a writer like Mrs. Gaskell or Miss Martineau who refused to allow him to take such liberties, and then it was a case of Greek meeting Greek. I think Dickens sensed that he had met his match in these ladies, but he behaved well toward both of them, in spite of the fact that Miss Martineau scurrilously abused him in a pamphlet. Still, I imagine he was glad there weren't many like them.

With Wills, his sub-editor, Dickens's relations were always most kind and friendly, but there never was any doubt

as to who was the master in that office. Once Wills received an attractive offer from another source. He inclined to feel that he could accept it and hold his position on 'Household Words' at the same time. Dickens thought the matter over carefully, then decided against it. 'But I am clear — to repeat it for the last time — that your entertainment of such a proposal as that made to you by Mr. Bruce is out of the question, and that I must ask you to abandon it.' [87] It is the tone of a man who is accustomed to being obeyed — is it not? And he was obeyed. Wills's reply throws a good deal of light on just what the relations were between him and his chief. 'So completely is my whole life bound up in *Household Words*,' he wrote, 'and in the connexion into which it brings me with you, that I feel the giving up of any project apart from it as an escape from a grim necessity, and anything that brings me into closer association with it and with you as an increase of my best inclinations and desires.' [88] Always generous in money matters, Dickens increased Wills's salary and the crisis was past. As for his other editorial subordinates, one quotation from the Wills Letters will suffice: 'It may save some discomfort hereafter if I beg you not to allow my old servant to be the subject of any kind of officiousness on the part of Holdsworth or Johnson. I have lately observed a little thing or two in that direction, not at all consistent with my notion of my supremacy.' [89]

It does not seem that Dickens often found it necessary to lose his temper in order to enforce his commands. In the early days, Macready records one awful outburst against Forster, but Forster was not an easy man to get on with. 'Dickens flew into so violent a passion as quite to forget himself, and gave Forster to understand that he was in his

house which he should be glad if he would leave.' Macready acted as peacemaker. 'I drew from Dickens the admission that he had spoken in passion and would not have said what he said could he have reflected; but he added that he could not answer for his temper under Forster's provocation, and that he should do just the same again.'[90] Dolby was a victim only once, and that was when he protested against Dickens in his delicate state of health, giving so many readings of the strenuous murder scene from 'Oliver Twist.' On that occasion, Dickens bounded from his chair and threw his knife and fork on his plate, smashing it to bits. 'Dolby!' he cried, 'your infernal caution will be your ruin one of these days.'[91] A moment later he wept, embraced his manager, and begged forgiveness. These were clearly very exceptional happenings. William Edrupt, his office-boy, testified: 'I never saw Mr. Dickens angry with any one who dealt fair with others, though he could get in a terrible rage over any one who did a mean thing.'[92]

Stupidity in others — especially stupidity with a touch of the malicious in it — seems never to have failed to exercise a corrosive effect on Dickens's temper. Once, at a time when a silly rumor was current that Dickens had become insane, he was walking along the seashore with Angus Fletcher, the eccentric sculptor. Observing Fletcher's characteristic pranks, and mistaking him somehow for Dickens, some of the passers-by commented audibly that the rumor must be true. Dickens, stung by the implication, struck out savagely: 'Hollo, Fletcher, I wish you'd moderate your insane gambolings! There are fools among the British public who might mistake you for me!'[93]

Another incident is much more to his credit. Once, as

chairman of a public meeting, it fell to Dickens to announce that Sims Reeves, the famous tenor, whose name was on the programme, had suffered a throat attack and was unable to appear. Now Mr. Reeves, having a sensitive throat, was frequently obliged to disappoint his audiences because of this infirmity, and — it being well known among certain sections of the public that singers and actors are not in any way subject to the infirmities of the flesh, and that consequently whenever one fails to appear, he must be either temperamental or intoxicated — the announcement was received with laughter. Dickens, furiously angry, went on quietly: 'My friend, Mr. Sims Reeves, regrets his inability to fulfill his engagement owing to an unfortunately amusing and highly facetious cold.' [94]

As an artist, Dickens had an amazing faculty for making copy out of the elements of his own experience, and I often think his dominating quality is shown best of all in the way he freely took what he wanted, sometimes with cavalier disregard of the rights of the individuals involved. In some cases, to be sure, he was definitely attacking an evil. The notorious magistrate Laing of Covent Garden was the original of Mr. Fang in 'Oliver Twist,' and the portrait was so effective that he was promptly removed from office. And there seems no real reason to doubt that, in spite of Dickens's own disclaimer, Squeers of 'Nicholas Nickleby' was William Shaw, a Yorkshire schoolmaster, and that the book brought serious hardship to him.[95] But there were other cases, where no malice was involved, yet which might easily have given offense. Just how much of Dickens's father went into Mr. Micawber and how much of his mother into Mrs. Nickleby has always been a hotly disputed question, but it

can hardly be maintained that there was no influence. There was more than a hint of Forster in Mr. Podsnap. Sir Peter Laurie, who is mercilessly caricatured as Alderman Cute in 'The Chimes,' is said to have been personally on friendly terms with Dickens, and to have been greatly surprised to find himself handled so roughly.[96] And Miss Mowcher, of 'David Copperfield,' recognized herself while the book was yet in progress, and protested so effectively that Dickens changed his plans concerning her.[97]

But the classical example here is Harold Skimpole, of 'Bleak House,' a portrait of Leigh Hunt. In this instance, we see Dickens fairly carried away by the ardor of creation: he is fully aware that he is doing an offensive thing, yet he seems powerless to stop. He takes counsel of his friends: he will alter, 'tone down,' change; he will do anything except the only thing that would be really safe — give up the idea altogether. When Hunt was offended at the identification of his idiosyncrasies with a villain, Dickens defended himself ingeniously but unconvincingly on the score that he never imagined that Skimpole's villainy would be supposed by readers to have been taken from the same original as his peculiarities. 'Every one in writing must speak from points of his experience, and so I of mine with you: but when I felt it was going too close I stopped myself, and the most blotted parts of my MS. are those in which I have been striving hard to make the impression I was writing from *un*-like you.' [98] Dickens lived to regret his lack of consideration for Hunt, and after his friend's death, he reviewed the whole matter, with humble admission of guilt, in his 'All the Year Round' paper, 'Leigh Hunt. A Remonstrance.'

Yes, he was an autocrat. Like his own Cheeryble brothers

— autocratic even in benevolence. And I leave this strain in Dickens with his description of his dream-theater, so very characteristic of the man: 'What do you think would be the realisation of one of my most cherished day-dreams? To settle down now for the remainder of my life within easy distance of a great theatre, in the direction of which I should hold supreme authority. It should be a house, of course, having a skilled and noble company, and one in every way magnificently appointed. The pieces acted should be dealt with according to my pleasure, and touched up here and there in obedience to my own judgment; the players as well as the plays being absolutely under my command. There, *that's* my daydream.' [99]

Not even Augustin Daly ever went as far as that.

IV

The enemies of Dickens find, both in his work and in his life, a certain shallowness and superficiality, consequent upon his lack of intellectual background and early training. As it affects his writing, this is a question of literary criticism, and as such I must not touch upon it here. As a factor in his life experience, it does, however, fall within my province.

Observers felt the lack, first of all, in his conversation. It was, says G. A. Sala, that 'of a very shrewd, clever man of the world, with the heartiest hatred of shams and humbugs.' Specifically, 'Dickens . . . seldom talked at length of literature, either of the present or of the past. He very rarely said anything about art; and, for what is usually termed "high art," I think that he had that profound contempt which is generally the outcome of lack of learning. . . . What he liked

to talk about was the latest new piece at the theatres, the latest exciting trial or police case, the latest social craze or social swindle, and especially the latest murder and the newest thing in ghosts.' [100]

To be sure, there was some development along this line. When George Henry Lewes visited him in Doughty Street, he found nothing in his library except 'three-volume novels and books of travel, all obviously the presentation copies from authors and publishers. . . .' But two years later he found a great improvement: 'The well-known three-volume novel no longer vulgarised the place; a goodly array of standard works, well-bound, showed a more respectable and conventional ambition; but there was no physiognomy in the collection. A greater change was visible in Dickens himself. In these two years he had remarkably developed. His conversation turned on graver subjects than theatres and actors, periodicals and London life. His interest in public affairs, especially in social questions, was keener. He still remained completely outside philosophy, science, and the higher literature, and was too unaffected a man to pretend to feel any interest in them.' [101]

Now Lewes's understanding of Dickens was not profound, and the sentences just quoted show quite as much about the writer as they do about the subject. Fortunately, we do not need to rely on Lewes alone, for two of Dickens's own remarks are far crueler to him than anything another might say. One is his saying, after having learned a little Italian, that he feels 'as if he had a new head on side by side with his old one.' [102] Much more of a howler is his remark concerning the mental attainments of Adelaide Procter: 'When she was quite a young child, she learnt with facility several of the

problems of Euclid. As she grew older, she acquired the French, Italian, and German languages; became a clever pianoforte player; and showed a true taste and sentiment in drawing. But, as soon as she had completely vanquished the difficulties of any one branch of study, it was her way to lose interest in it, and pass to another.' [103]

There is no denying that this intellectual naïveté — if I may term it so — exercised considerable influence on Dickens's work. It would be very unfair to suggest that he was not an intelligent man. He had a quick, keen, adaptable intelligence in all things. Only, he had none of the background and none of the interests of the 'intellectual.' Myself, I have a strong suspicion that he was none the worse for it, and that, if he had received an Oxford education, his books might have been, in many respects, less interesting than they are. As I pointed out in the chapter on 'Dickens as Artist,' he was able to achieve world-wide popularity as the historian of the common people simply because he shared their prepossessions and understood their point of view. That this sometimes involved crudeness and vulgarity, we have already seen, but crudeness and vulgarity do not interfere especially with the free expression of the creative instinct. Too much refinement and a highly self-critical attitude frequently do.

Dickens lived in an age of ever-increasing specialization. He distrusted the specialist and had no appreciation of his work. Scholarship and pedantry were for him synonymous terms, and historical research seemed a sheer waste of time. We may be sure that the narrator of 'The Wreck of the Golden Mary' speaks for Dickens when he says, 'It has always been my opinion since I first possessed such a thing as

an opinion, that the man who knows only one subject is next tiresome to the man who knows no subject.' [104] The burlesque of research in 'Pickwick' and the account in 'Nicholas Nickleby' of Mr. Curdle, who 'had written a pamphlet of sixty-four pages, post octavo, on the character of the Nurse's deceased husband in Romeo and Juliet, with an inquiry whether he really had been a "merry man" in his life-time, or whether it was merely his widow's affectionate partiality that induced her so to report him,' and who 'had likewise proved, that by altering the received mode of punctuation, any one of Shakespeare's plays could be made quite different, and the sense completely changed' [105] — these things are so amusing that one hardly has the heart to cite them in this connection. But they do not stand by any means alone.

A natural result of this is his almost entire lack of historic sense. He did not trouble himself very much about history. When he did, he judged everything by the standards of the present, and that which did not square with the prepossessions of Charles Dickens, English radical of the nineteenth century, was summarily condemned. Here again his weakness is curiously bound up with his strength. It is a good thing to look forward instead of backward, to feel that yours is the privilege of living 'in the summer-dawn of time,' and to give yourself to the work of making the world a better place for those who come after you to live in. It was good too to show the superficial silliness of much of the pseudo-mediævalism of the day.[106] And perhaps it was best of all to feel and to say that spirituality is not a matter of period costumes and the absence of mechanical conveniences, even if you went to the extent of believing that many modern im-

provements 'might have been disclosed by divine lips nigh upon two thousand years ago, but that the people of that time could not bear them.' [107]

But there were some other things that were not so good. It is not good to be so limited to the point of view of a single period that you fail altogether to see how one age can supplement or complement another. Dickens takes a gratuitous fling at the past and at reverence for the past every mortal chance he gets. When the chance is not there, he makes it.[108] To be sure, he never falls into the error involved in the corollary of this proposition: if he thought the past was all wrong, he never committed the far worse error of imagining the present to be all right. But it is not good to lose your sense of perspective to such an extent that, as you read the records of the past, you wonder why, in the good old days, God did not destroy the world for its sins.[109] If God were in the wrecking business, doubtless he could find plenty to keep even Him busy to-day. It is not good to feel, as you look at Roman ruins, that you really like new things best and crave novelty.[110] And it is not good to import your prejudices into the teaching of history to the young so shamelessly as Dickens did in his notorious 'Child's History of England.'

Perhaps Dickens's harshness toward the past is not wholly unconnected with his social consciousness. For there is no doubt whatever that those of his contemporaries who possessed an historic sense frequently used it to justify and to palliate inherited evils. With this Dickens had no patience whatever. 'If ever I destroy myself,' he once exclaimed, 'it will be in the bitterness of hearing those infernal and damnably good old times extolled.' [111] And in 'Dombey

and Son,' speaking of the tenements, he pronounces a solemn curse on those 'who stickle for the Plague as part and parcel of the wisdom of our ancestors, and who do their little best to keep those dwellings miserable!' [112]

Yet, although Dickens was an agressive modern, he did not allow his mind to expand to anything like the breadth which the knowledge of the modern world encourages and makes possible. If the nineteenth century was anything, it was an age of science. Yet Dickens hardly knows science except as mesmerism and hypnotism and phrenology and physiognomy. There are two scientific passages in 'Dombey and Son,' [113] though neither of them implies any scientific knowledge, and one passage in the 'Miscellaneous Papers' shows some sense of the romantic aspects of science.[114] There is some interest in psychology — or rather in psychoanalysis, though Dickens does not employ either term. Miss Wade, of 'Little Dorrit,' is suffering from an inferiority complex.[115] There is a careful study of Tackleton's suppressed desires in 'The Cricket on the Hearth.' [116] In Tom Gradgrind, of 'Hard Times,' we see too much restraint, breaking out in hypocrisy, sensuality, and lack of control. [117] John Jasper, of 'Edwin Drood,' is another study in repression.[118] All this Dickens achieved, however, as Shakespeare often did, simply as an observer of humanity, and not because of any scientific interests as such. I do not recall that he ever mentions Evolution. All in all, his idea of the scientific man would seem to be fairly well summed up in his picture in 'Pickwick' of the learned gentleman who wrote a treatise on the mysterious lights in the garden.[119]

V

There are those who feel that the shallowness of Dickens's culture is even more unmistakably manifested in the more general aspects of his life. Consider for a moment Dickens as a traveler. He himself tells us that when he traveled he was in a perpetual hurry. 'But it is such a delight to me to leave new scenes behind, and still go on, encountering newer scenes. . . .' [120] Macready, to be sure, says that this was because Dickens gathered impressions so quickly: he did not need to pause. But this is a ludicrous judgment. Dickens gathered surface impressions quickly, it is true, but this was a decided misfortune, for it meant that in many cases he was satisfied with what he could get in that way, and would not take the trouble to penetrate beneath the surface. Hence the thinness and superficiality of the travel books, so unerringly evaluated, in the case of the 'American Notes,' by Thackeray. 'What could Dickens mean by writing that book of *American Notes*? No man should write about the country under 5 years of experience, and as many of previous reading. A visit to the Tombs, to Laura Bridgman and the Blind Asylum, a description of Broadway — O Lord, is that describing America? It's a mole or a pimple on the great Republican body, or a hair of its awful beard and no more.' [121]

Again, there is his hunger for publicity. Naturally enough, he himself denies this. But he lived in the public eye, and he liked to hear his name in the public mouth. I have elsewhere defended the 'Personal' statement issued by Dickens at the time of his separation from his wife. I believe it was necessary that it should be published, but there is no doubt that it does illustrate the man's tendency to live in the

limelight, to take the general public into his confidence. When he traveled, hardly any amount of homage was too much to please him. And when it was combined with the intoxication of acting, the cup of his happiness was full: 'Blow Domestic Hearth! I should like to be going all over the kingdom . . . and acting everywhere. There is nothing in the world equal to seeing the house rise at you, one sea of delighted faces, one hurrah of applause.' [122]

Dickens has long been known as the novelist of the domestic hearth. In our own day, this, too, has been used by his critics to make a point against him, for what they call 'bourgeois, middle-class respectability' is sadly out of favor these days, and so they accuse Dickens of preaching a gospel of creature comfort which blinks all the real facts of life. There is no denying that creature comfort is one element in the charm of Dickens's novels, but when it comes to the allied charge of smugness and bondage to conventionality, I find hardly any evidence at all. It is true that sexual passion does not enter into Dickens's novels until the very end, but here he was simply following the fashion of his day, precisely as the objectors — who write about almost nothing else — are simply following the fashion of their day. There may still be some room for intelligent difference of opinion as to which is the more wholesome fashion.

Dickens strikes smugness and conventionality directly on numerous occasions: indeed, I have been surprised in collecting this material to find how extensive it really is.

To begin with, there are the passages in which smugness is simply made fun of in a good-natured way. Thus Mrs. Hominy blushes at the mention of the 'naked' eye; [123] the Pecksniff daughters are shocked at their father's reference

to human passions;[124] and Mrs. Todgers is paralyzed with shame, for fear Mr. Pecksniff might catch a glimpse of the sofa bedstead 'in all its monstrous impropriety.'[125] Bumble, the beadle of 'Oliver Twist,' embarrasses even himself when he inadvertently speaks to Mrs. Corney of 'a man with hardly a rag upon his back,' and then apologizes on the ground that after all she has been a married woman.[126] Very similarly, in 'Little Dorrit,' Flora apologizes to Arthur Clennam for having mentioned the word 'skirt' in his presence, but concludes that after all he must know there are such things.[127] Mrs. General closes her eyes when she utters the word 'passion,' 'as if she could not utter it, and see anybody,'[128] and the Formal Couple are not quite certain whether attending a christening is not somewhat indecent, the ceremony involving as it does the public exhibition of a baby.[129]

There are other attacks on prudery that are somewhat more serious than these. Thus there is Mrs. General's 'method' in 'Little Dorrit,' and I cannot help thinking that Dickens intended Mrs. General to symbolize a good many of his contemporaries:

'Mrs. General had no opinions. Her way of forming a mind was to prevent it from forming opinions. She had a little circular set of mental grooves or rails on which she started little trains of other people's opinions, which never overtook one another, and never got anywhere. Even her propriety could not dispute that there was impropriety in the world; but Mrs. General's way of getting rid of it was to put it out of sight, and make believe that there was no such thing. This was another of her ways of forming a mind — to cram all articles of difficulty into cup-

boards, lock them up, and say they had no existence. It was the easiest way, and, beyond all comparison, the properest.

'Mrs. General was not to be told of anything shocking. Accidents, miseries, and offences, were never to be mentioned before her. Passion was to go to sleep in the presence of Mrs. General, and blood was to change to milk and water. The little that was left in the world when all these deductions were made, it was Mrs. General's province to varnish. In that formation process of hers, she dipped the smallest of brushes into the largest of pots, and varnished the surface of every object that came under consideration. The more cracked it was, the more Mrs. General varnished it.' [130]

With Mrs. General is Miss Twinkleton — she who felt that she must lower her voice when speaking of the future wives and mothers of England, and who manifested something very close to creative genius in her reading aloud:

'. . . Rose soon made the discovery that Miss Twinkleton didn't read fairly. She cut the love-scenes, interpolated passages in praise of female celibacy, and was guilty of other glaring pious frauds. As an instance in point, take the glowing passage: "Ever dearest and best adored, — said Edward, clasping the dear head to his breast, and drawing the silken hair through his caressing fingers, from which he suffered it to fall like golden rain, — ever dearest and best adored, let us fly from the unsympathetic world and the sterile coldness of the stony-hearted, to the rich warm Paradise of Trust and Love." Miss Twinkleton's fraudulent version tamely ran thus: "Ever engaged to me with the consent of our parents on both sides, and the approbation of the silver-haired rector of the district, — said Edward, respectfully raising to his lips the taper fingers so skilful

in embroidery, tambour, crochet, and other truly feminine arts, — let me call on thy papa ere to-morrow's dawn has sunk into the west, and propose a suburban establishment, lowly it may be, but within our means, where he will be always welcome as an evening guest, and where every arrangement shall invest economy, and constant interchange of scholastic acquirements with the attributes of the ministering angel to domestic bliss.'' [131]

But the severest indictment ever drawn by Dickens against those who refuse to face the facts of life is undoubtedly his portrait of Mr. Podsnap. Here smugness and niceness line up on the side of social injustice, thus suggesting a criterion by which Dickens judged many things. It will be remembered that '. . . Mr. Podsnap settled that whatever he put behind him he put out of existence. There was a dignified conclusiveness — not to add a grand convenience — in this way of getting rid of disagreeables, which had done much toward establishing Mr. Podsnap in his lofty place in Mr. Podsnap's satisfaction. "I don't want to know about it; I don't choose to discuss it; I don't admit it". Mr. Podsnap had even acquired a peculiar flourish of his right arm in often clearing the world of its most difficult problems by sweeping them behind (and consequently sheer away) with those words and a flushed face. For they affronted him.' [132] Perhaps best of all as indicating the consequences of Podsnappery is the indiscreet reference of one guest to the very unpleasant fact that half a dozen people have lately starved to death in London.

The conventions enter rather less definitely into Dickens's province. In 'Oliver Twist,' Rose Maylie does indeed refuse to marry Harry on the ground of her illegitimate birth, but

in the maturer 'Bleak House,' Esther Summerson is in Rose's position, and the question never comes up save negatively in Mr. Jarndyce's reference to Esther's aunt whose distorted religion conceived a need 'for the child to expiate an offence of which she was quite innocent.' [133] In 'Hard Times,' Stephen Blackpool's predicament is an argument in favor of more liberal divorce laws, which must have seemed quite as radical to the nineteenth century as some of Mr. Galsworthy's social studies do to-day,[134] and there is more divorce discussion in one of the 'Miscellaneous Papers.' [135] Two other points worth mentioning in connection with the conventions are Caddy Jellyby's repudiation of her duty as a child until her mother shall have learned hers as a parent,[136] and the fact that it is Florence Dombey who proposes marriage between herself and Walter.[137]

But some critics feel that Dickens's shallowness taints his record also in the precise aspect in which serious, non-literary people have always admired him most — that is, in his capacity as reformer. Here, they allege, he always played safe. When he attacked an evil, it was always a recognized evil: he did not anticipate his age. Hence, for example — and in spite of all his sympathy with working-men — his opposition to Socialism,[138] his mistrust of strikes,[139] his general pro-capital position.[140]

In its extreme and unmodified form, this theory is so ridiculous as hardly to deserve refutation. All *successful* reformers catch the spirit of their age: that is what makes them successful. A voice crying in the wilderness may succeed in satisfying its own conscience, but it does not directly and immediately benefit humanity. The effective reformer, contrariwise, always does just what Dickens did: he makes

himself the voice, the personified conscience of the age. We have already seen that Dickens's sympathy with his own *Zeit-geist* was of great help to him as an artist. It served him also in other capacities, and thus this charge against him becomes a kind of left-handed compliment. Dickens *did* put private schools of the Squeers type out of business; he *did* help to destroy imprisonment for debt, short-sighted poor-laws, and Chancery abuses. Moreover, on the matter of capital punishment he is ahead of us still, and so long as that particular species of legalized murder appears on our statute books in England and in America, we had better keep our mouths shut concerning Dickens being outdistanced as a reformer! [141]

There is one matter, however, in connection with which I confess I am deeply disappointed to find Dickens on the obscurantist side. This is the question of war.[142] Of course Dickens feels the wicked wastefulness, the sinful brutality of war. That much goes without saying. Yet whenever it comes to a show-down, he is on the side of war and not of peace. His novels, his miscellaneous writings, his speeches, his letters — their testimony on this point is unanimous. Once he speaks scornfully of 'imbecile mediation with dangerous madmen abroad.' [143] In a public address he declares that war is 'at any time and in any shape, a most dreadful and deplorable calamity,' and then immediately he proceeds to eat his words: 'But there are seasons when the evils of peace . . . are immeasurably greater. . . .' [144] Dickens's letters show that he was deeply conscious that the Crimean War would seriously retard the social progress of England, yet here, as elsewhere, he allows himself to be carried away by the mood of the moment, and talks dis-

gracefully, like a politician: 'For all this it is an indubitable fact, I conceive, that Russia MUST be stopped, and that the future peace renders the war imperative upon us.' [145] In precisely that way, every war that has ever been waged since history began has been justified.

It will be objected that I have lost my historic sense in this connection, that it is not fair to judge Dickens's attitude toward war by the standards of to-day, when it has become evident to all intelligent men that the destruction of war is the imperative, all-inclusive problem upon which the future of civilization now depends. But the mere fact that there was a peace movement in existence for Dickens to ridicule is sufficient to prove that on this question, even as on the liquor issue, he was behind the most enlightened thought of his time rather than ahead of it. Macready's attitude toward war contrasts rather sharply with his: 'Read the newspaper; was disgusted with the tone of the American Press anticipating a war with England. War! war! That men, the creatures of a God of wisdom and love, should rush forward in savage delight to mangle and slay each other! Oh, God! oh, God! when will Thy blessed gift of reason be universal in its use among men?' [146] You may feel that you could spare the exclamatory emotionalism, and so could I — if I had in exchange for it something as clear-headed and uncompromising as the simple sentence of another friend of Dickens's, Douglas Jerrold — 'War is murder in uniform.' How far Dickens himself was from that may be inferred from the fact that at one time he seriously anticipated a war between England and the United States, and would doubtless have supported it if it had come.[147] Never do I find a suggestion of any consciousness on his part that patriotism to-day, in

the popular, nationalistic sense of the term, is, as a clear-headed friend of mine has put it, 'nothing more than that magnified greed for material things which was practiced by the earliest tiny tribes.' He never learned that soldiers fight battles to enrich a little body of plutocrats: to the end of his days, he imagined that they fight in defense of their country.

VI

The Devil's Advocate has never ventured to call Dickens a liar, but he does suggest that there were several famous instances in which he failed to tell the truth. Let him present the facts here.

The first of these is the Binney matter. This started with a letter of Dickens's to Professor C. C. Felton, first printed in 1872 by James T. Fields in his 'Yesterdays with Authors.' This letter tells an amusing story of Dickens, Cruikshank, and a bad-mannered independent clergyman at the funeral of William Hone in 1843. The clergyman, as it happened, was Thomas Binney, who afterwards attained celebrity. The reprinting of this story by Forster drew forth a protest from Binney, in which he claimed that Dickens had wholly misrepresented the facts. In this he was warmly seconded by Cruikshank. Forster took the matter seriously enough to insert a special note discussing it in his 1874 edition, and later dropped the incident altogether. There is a full discussion of the whole subject in Robertson Nicoll's badly named book, 'Dickens's Own Story.'

The second matter comes out of Dickens's agitation for international copyright on his first American tour, and is the more remarkable since Dickens, both in the dedication and the conclusion of the 'American Notes,' seems to enjoy the

luxury of martyrizing himself as an apostle of truth. 'I should like,' he writes Forster from America, 'to have a short letter addressed to me, by the principal English authors who signed the international copyright petition, expressive of their sense that I have done my duty to the cause. I am sure I deserve it, but I don't wish it on that ground. It is because its publication in the best journals here would unquestionably do great good.' [148] The letter was secured and published, but nowhere did Dickens explain that it had proceeded from his own suggestion.

Nor does Dickens seem to have written the whole truth concerning his copyright agitation to Forster himself. 'My friends were paralyzed with wonder at such audacious daring. The notion that I, a man alone by himself, in America, should venture to suggest to the Americans that there was one point on which they were neither just to their own countrymen nor to us, actually struck the boldest dumb! Washington Irving, Prescott, Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Washington Allston — every man who writes in this country is devoted to the question, and not one of them *dares* to raise his voice and complain of the atrocious state of the law.' [149] Such the report, but what were the facts? That at the New York dinner in honor of Dickens, Washington Irving had proposed the toast International Copyright, to which Cornelius Mathews responded, and that on February 14, the 'New York Tribune' had editorially endorsed Dickens's stand! [150]

At the close of his life, there is yet another instance. Writing to Ticknor and Fields, and glancing at the many pirated, unauthorized issues of his work then current in America, Dickens remarked: 'In America the occupation of

my life for thirty years is, unless it bears your imprint, utterly worthless and profitless to me.' At this both Harper and Brothers, of New York, and T. P. Peterson and Brothers, of Philadelphia, were greatly offended, for both these firms had been publishing Dickens's books for years, and paying him royalties on every copy sold.[151]

All these cases of apparent prevarication on Dickens's part may be grouped together and, I think, disposed of briefly. I have no desire whatever to whitewash him (as I think some of the other portions of this chapter have shown), but I believe we shall go far astray in this particular case if we fail to take into consideration the fact that we are dealing with a very imaginative man. It is the writer's business to re-character and re-mould his experiences in terms of his own personality. When he does this in his books, we call him a creative genius. When he does it in his private correspondence, we call him a liar. Now I am far from believing that Dickens was a liar, but there is no denying that he did sometimes allow himself to be carried away by his imagination. Especially is this true, I believe, in the Binney matter, which, it seems to me, Nicoll considers much too seriously. It must be remembered that Binney's objections were made thirty years after the event. He is a brave man who ventures to deny that he made an ass of himself thirty years ago! Moreover, it should be noted, Binney does not pretend that Dickens invented the incident, but simply that he modified it and heightened its colors. Dickens was writing, not for the public, but for a friend, in a letter which there is no reason to suppose he expected would ever be printed. The worst that can be said is that he entertained his friend by elaborating a little story, based on experience, but not

wholly confined to it, or, in other words, that he did in a letter what, on a very much larger scale, he was in the habit of doing in his fictions. A dissenting clergyman was one of the characters in the story, and since Dickens disliked dissenting clergymen, the elaboration was, quite naturally, at that gentleman's expense. It was a rather dangerous thing to do, as the sequel proved, but I think there was no malicious attempt to deceive.

The other cases may, at least in part, be similarly explained. Dickens could have had no motive for deceiving Forster concerning the real state of international copyright in America. He was simply trying to convey the idea that the country was against it, which was true — as is sufficiently attested by the fact that it was not until long after Dickens's time that the international copyright law was enacted — and he did not think it necessary to stop and qualify by naming the exceptions. I think it must frankly be admitted that Dickens here showed a marked capacity for being carried away by his feelings to such an extent that he overlooked or forgot the facts. Similarly, in the case of the letter to Fields. Dickens was very grateful to Ticknor and Fields for their generous treatment of him, and he became so enthusiastic in expressing his gratitude that he actually insulted two other publishers who had been equally fair. The insult was inexcusable, but it well illustrates his impulsive nature. In connection with the letters from his fellow-authors, no falsification is involved: Dickens simply *withheld* a portion of the truth. Unquestionably the letter would make a greater impression if it seemed to come unsolicited, and if his conscience troubled him at all about the matter, he doubtless comforted himself with the reflection

that it was a white lie in a good cause. Whatever you call it, the question is not serious enough to merit further discussion.

Somewhat more noteworthy is another matter. Although Dickens as novelist is a great preacher of the Christian ethic, and although he understands and often beautifully exemplifies in his books the beauty of forgiveness, there is more than one instance in his life where he cherishes petty resentments in a way that does small credit either to his intelligence or to his heart. In his books, too, he frequently punishes his villains in the spirit of popular melodrama, and I have sometimes wondered whether little Jenny Wren, putting pepper on the vinegar and brown paper plasters she makes for Fledgeby, is not an image of Dickens devising curious punishments for his villains. Sikes, Squeers, Chester, Quilp, Pecksniff, and Jonas Chuzzlewit are only a few who are treated in this way. Indeed, when Tom Pinch punishes Jonas *accidentally*, I feel we have achieved a great triumph. The natural man is satisfied, yet the law of Christ is not broken!

But to get back to the subject, which is Dickens's private life. First, the matter of publishers. Forster has declared of Dickens that 'though his resentments were easily and quickly roused, they were never very lasting.' [152] Yet Dickens quarreled with Macrone, he quarreled with Bentley, he quarreled with Bradbury and Evans, he quarreled with Chapman and Hall. It has long been recognized that Forster's account of these squabbles was a partisan one and not wholly fair to the publishers: now Mr. Ley in his annotated Forster has gathered all the evidence together and shown quite conclusively that, in his relations with publishers at least, Dickens was not what could be termed a

good sport.[153] In more than one instance, indeed, he was a little petty in his attitude toward them. Yet in judging Dickens, here as elsewhere, we must remember his great contempt for technicalities. He knew that his early publishers were quite within the law in holding him to bargains which had been made before his great vogue began, and which at the time had been generous, but it seemed to him greedy and unfair on their part that they should withhold from him his share of the additionally accruing profits which nobody had been able to foresee, but which his genius had earned, and his sense of injustice inflamed his imagination to the point where it really was, as he felt, impossible for him to write until some adjustment should have been made. 'For I do solemnly declare, that morally before God and man, I hold myself released from such hard bargains as these, after I have done so much for those who drove them.' [154]

I think it is clear also that Dickens cherished some resentment against the Americans for their unfavorable reception of his 'American Notes.' I am not sorry he wrote 'Martin Chuzzlewit': it did America good. As Mr. Wilkins has shown, many of the most obnoxious details in it were copied directly from Dickens's own American experiences, and they are not exaggerated to anything like the degree to which an American would like to feel they are exaggerated. Theodore Roosevelt's savage reaction, at his late date, to 'Martin Chuzzlewit,' — 'Dickens was an ill-natured, selfish cad and boor, who had no understanding of what the word gentleman meant, and no appreciation of hospitality or good treatment' [155] — seems to me childish and a little silly. Still, I think you do feel decidedly the presence of rancor in 'Chuz-

zlewit,' a rancor that is wholly absent from the earlier book. John Tulloch perceived this as the novel was being serialized: 'I fear greatly Dickens is caricaturing the Americans to gratify his spleen against them for their ill usage of his late work in America.' [156] And Lewis Gaylord Clark recalls how Dickens told him that 'All the newspapers, journals, and *unrecognized* letters which reach me from America, go, unopened, at once into the fire.' [157]

Much less excusable than all this are the three famous quarrels of Dickens's life — with Thackeray, with Jerrold, and with Mark Lemon — as well as the less famous, but in some ways even more contemptible resentment against Charles Lever.

As we have already seen, Dickens at one time thought highly of Lever. Their friendship survived Dickens's disastrous attempt to serialize Lever's novel, 'A Day's Ride' in 'All the Year Round' — circulation fell off so seriously that Dickens was finally driven to advertise the day on which the serial would end! — but it did not survive a much less serious test. When Lever's 'Lorrequer' appeared, one reviewer remarked that he would rather have written 'Lorrequer' than all the 'Pickwicks' and 'Nicklebys' in the world. This sentence was quoted in the 'Lorrequer' advertisements, and Dickens seems to have felt that Lever himself was in some way responsible for it. Lever's biographer, W. J. Fitzpatrick, says that Dickens 'at last responded ungraciously to a civil letter of Lever's, and it was not for years that friendly relations were resumed.' [158]

The quarrel with Thackeray occurred in 1858, and was occasioned by an offensive article about Thackeray which had been written by Edmund Yates.[159] The question had

already been submitted to the Garrick Club when Dickens, who was a friend of Yates, interfered in the matter, offering his services as arbiter. It should be said that he was inspired in this matter by his loving remembrance of Yates's actor-parents, as well as by his gratitude for a service the young man had recently done him.[160] It is, however, impossible to excuse his wounding the innocent party to protect the guilty, and the duration of the resultant estrangement from Thackeray — a period of five years — is especially shocking. Then they met in a London club and passed each other silently, but, when Thackeray turned and held out his hand, Dickens took it.[161] That Christmas, Thackeray died. Young Marcus Stone, going to Gadshill for the holidays, was met by Dickens and knew from his manner that something was wrong. 'I went up to him, and said, "What is it?" and he said, in a breaking voice, "Thackeray is dead." I said, "I know you must feel it very deeply, because you and he were not on friendly terms." He put his hand on my arm, and said, so earnestly, "Thank God, my boy, we were!"' [162]

The estrangement from Douglas Jerrold was only a matter of months. In this case, Dickens was in no sense the aggressor: the disagreement resulted from Jerrold's taking exception to his views on capital punishment.[163] Dickens himself told the story of their reconciliation in a letter to Jerrold's son, Blanchard Jerrold: 'Of his generosity, I had a proof, within these two or three years, which it saddens me to think of now. There had been an estrangement between us — not on any personal subject, and not involving an angry word — and a good many months had passed without my once seeing him in the street, when it fell out that we dined, each with his own separate party, in the strangers'

room of a club. Our chairs were almost back to back, and I took mine after he was seated at dinner. I said not a word (I am sorry to remember) and did not look his way. Before we had sat so, long, he openly wheeled his chair round, stretched out both his hands in a most engaging manner, and said aloud, with a bright and loving face that I can see as I write to you: "For God's sake, let us be friends again! Life's not long enough for this!"' [164]

The other quarrel — the one with Mark Lemon — grew out of the miseries of Dickens's separation from his wife. Lemon acted for Mrs. Dickens in the preliminaries of that affair and Forster represented Dickens. When Lemon refused to print in 'Punch' the 'Personal' statement which Dickens was anxious to have circulated as widely as possible, Dickens withdrew his affection from his old friend, and the estrangement continued until 1863, when Clarkson Stanfield, on his death-bed, brought about the reconciliation, and the two men clasped hands again over Stanfield's grave.

I think it worth mentioning that, in all three of these quarrels, the movement toward reconciliation was made, not by Dickens, but by another party. Marcus Stone's account of his grief at the death of Thackeray leaves no doubt with regard to his sincerity, and the memorial article in the 'Cornhill' [165] is further evidence here. Yet Dickens would have let Thackeray go to his grave unreconciled if the other man had not been big enough to swallow his pride for the sake of friendship.

VII

So ends the Speech of the Devil's Advocate against Charles Dickens.

Feet of clay?

Yes, human clay.

There is little there, I fancy, for the Freudians and the 'misbehaviorists,' little to impugn the validity of Carlyle's noble tribute: 'The good, the gentle, high-gifted, ever friendly, noble Dickens, every inch of him an honest man.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAN AND HIS SOUL

I

And then, finally, behind and beyond everything else, informing it and infusing it, and investing it with whatever significance it may have, is this all-embracing, all-inclusive reality: God. For Dickens, as for all the sons of men, the whole question of success or failure in life is summed up here: How did his being adjust itself to the Cosmic Energy that fills the world? And how did that much of Cosmic Energy as was Charles Dickens react upon and toward the whole?

Let us approach the matter, first, conventionally, from the standpoint of ordinary religious beliefs and observances. For, after all, this is fundamentally the means of approach which Dickens himself essayed.

He was always, in Evangelical parlance, a 'professing' Christian, and though he never vaunted his faith, he testified to it freely whenever occasion seemed to require. Odd as it now seems, the pronounced Evangelicals of his own day had their doubts about him, and even about the influence of his books, and, whenever their charges are preferred against him, he repels them, indignantly and with evident sincerity.[1]

His religion was Christo-centric, but abstract questions of theory did not interest him very much — no more in religion than they did in art — and though his 'Hymn of the Wiltshire Labourers' seems to imply faith in the Divinity of Christ, I doubt very much that he would have been deeply

interested to discuss the problems involved. On such matters he probably accepted the more or less orthodox opinions of his time, without affording them any too careful examination. What he was really interested in, however, was the practical and inspirational leadership of Christ in daily life. As his sons left him, one by one, he wrote each of them an earnest letter, exhorting him simply but sincerely always to follow that ideal.[2] To think of Jesus as simply one of the many great religious leaders of mankind seemed to him nothing short of blasphemy.[3] As for the Church, he was sure that she could play an honorable rôle in the world only as she held fast to Christ.[4]

He was similarly in earnest with regard to the other things that Christians generally regard as necessary to successful spiritual living — prayer, the Bible, immortality. When Hans Christian Andersen visited in his house, every meal began with a silent prayer.[5] When the dying Lady Lovelace asked him, 'Do you ever pray?' he replied, 'Every morning and every evening.'[6] In a similar vein, he advised his son: 'Never abandon the wholesome practice of saying your own private prayers, night and morning. I have never abandoned it myself, and I know the comfort of it.'[7]

The New Testament — his Bible was, in effect, the New Testament — he thought of as 'the best book that ever was, or will be, known in the world; and ... it teaches... the best lessons by which any human creature, who tries to be truthful and faithful to duty, can possibly be guided.'[8] Again he writes, 'There cannot be many men, I believe, who have a more humble veneration for the New Testament, or a more profound conviction of its all-sufficiency than I have.'[9] In 'Dombey and Son' this all-sufficiency is beauti-

fully illustrated: 'Harriet complied and read — read the eternal book for all the weary and heavy-laden; for all the wretched, fallen, and neglected of this earth — read the blessed history, in which the blind lame palsied beggar, the criminal, the woman stained with shame, the shunned of all our dainty clay, has each a portion, that no human pride, indifference, or sophistry, through all the ages that this world shall last, can take away, or by the thousandth atom of a grain reduce — read the ministry of Him who, through the round of human life, and all its hopes and griefs, from birth to death, from infancy to age, had sweet compassion for, and interest in, its every scene and stage, its every suffering and sorrow.' [10] Perhaps of all the tributes that have been paid to Dickens, the one he would most have appreciated is Professor William Lyon Phelps's saying that his novels are virtually a commentary on the Four Gospels.[11]

As for immortality, Dickens and his characters alike simply take it for granted: the possibility that it might be a delusion, a vain hope, is never even raised. Take Lucie Manette saying good-bye to Darnay: 'My husband. . . . We shall not be separated long. I feel that this will break my heart by-and-by; but I will do my duty while I can, and when I leave her,* God will raise up friends for her, as He did for me.' [12] Dickens took this same comfort to himself in his personal sorrows: for all his transport of grief over the death of Mary, there is never the slightest suggestion of doubt that, somewhere in the universe, Mary is alive. The rather naïve Niagara passage, already quoted in another connection, here bears ample testimony to the surety of his faith: 'I was going to add, what would I give if the dear girl

* Their child, little Lucie.

whose ashes lie in Kensal Green, had lived to come so far along with us — but she has been here many times, I doubt not, since her sweet face faded from my earthly sight.' [13] In his writings, immortality perhaps finds its best expression in 'A Child's Dream of a Star,' and in the famous description of the death of Paul Dombey:

'The golden ripple on the wall came back again, and nothing else stirred in the room. The old, old fashion! The fashion that came in with our first garments, and will last unchanged until our race has run its course, and the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll. The old, old fashion — Death!

'Oh thank GOD, all who see it, for that older fashion yet, of Immortality! And look upon us, angels of young children, with regards not quite estranged, when the swift river bears us to the ocean!' [14]

Until 'the wide firmament is rolled up like a scroll.' Does that mean that Dickens believed, good Fundamentalist fashion, in the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ? Along with this, there is a passage in Forster which seems to indicate that he believed in a personal Devil.[15] Well, Dickens was none too critical in accepting his faith, and he probably swallowed, first and last, a good many of the superstitions that have in the course of history managed to attach themselves to Christian belief. But that sort of thing is rarely referred to, and, so far as his life is concerned, it must have been very much as if it had not been there.

Perhaps the one passage in Dickens to which the Evangelicals took most marked exception was the elder Weller's speculation concerning the New Birth: 'She's got hold o' some inwention for grown-up people being born again,

Sammy,' that worthy reports of his amiable consort, 'the new birth, I thinks they calls it. I should wery much like to see that system in haction, Sammy. I should wery much like to see your mother-in-law born again. Wouldn't I put her out to nurse!' [16] When a correspondent called attention to this passage, Dickens defended himself on the ground that he was not ridiculing sacred things, but simply the way in which hypocrites and nincompoops abuse sacred things.[17] 'That every man who seeks heaven must be born again, in good thoughts of his Maker, I sincerely believe.' [18] You see how carefully he strips it of abstruse metaphysical significance? It was a characteristic definition. Forster tells us that as Dickens grew older he lost whatever faith he had ever possessed in the spiritual efficacy of baptism, and clung to the custom rather because it assisted in cementing human ties than because he imagined it in any way changed God's attitude toward a human soul.[19]

II

I have already referred to the fact that, though to many of us to-day Dickens seems one of the outstanding exponents of Evangelical Christianity in fiction, there were those in his own time who considered him nothing of the sort. This impression needs somehow to be accounted for. It will help us, I believe, to come somewhat closer to the individuality of the man's religious experience if we essay for a moment a negative approach, and consider those aspects of religious faith and practice which did *not* appeal to him.

He loathed and despised any touch of ostentation or display of piety. I hardly know which Dickens would have felt to be worse — to live without God in the world, and as those

live who have no hope, or to possess faith and piety and make a show of them. Perhaps he would hardly have admitted that the dilemma could exist, for he felt very strongly that 'The more we are in earnest as to feeling it [the truth and beauty of religion], the less we are disposed to hold forth about it.' [20] Pious lingo was intolerably disgusting to him,[21] and especially the tone of general familiarity with God affected by certain clergymen of the ranting persuasion.[22] The villainous Jonas Chuzzlewit, like the Devil in 'The Merchant of Venice,' quotes Scripture for his purpose.[23] And in 'Bleak House,' poor Jo's description of Mr. Chadband's prayer — all the more significantly because it is out of character — involves a world of commentary on pietistic professions and religious inefficiency: '"... Mr. Chadbands he wos a-prayin wunst at Mr. Sangsby's, and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he wos a-speakin' to hisself, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but *I* couldn't make out nothink on it. Different times, there was other genlmen come down Tom-all-Alone's a-prayin, but they all mostly sed as the t'other wuns prayed wrong, and all mostly sounded to be a-talking to theirselves, or a-passing blame on the t'others, and not a-talkin to us. *We* never knowd nothink. *I* never knowd what it wos all about."' [24]

Dickens himself is speaking in every line of that comment. When negotiations for the purchase of Gadshill were in progress, he was so much disgusted by the professions of piety on the part of one of the gentlemen involved that he refused to deal with him personally, and simply turned the matter over to his agents.[25] His convictions on the subject in general he summed up in the 'Preface to the First Cheap Edition,' of 'Pickwick': 'Lest there should be any well-

intentioned persons who do not perceive the difference . . . between religion and the cant of religion, piety and the pretence of piety, a humble reverence for the great truths of Scripture and an audacious and offensive obtrusion of its letter and not its spirit in the commonest dissensions and meanest affairs of life, to the extraordinary confusion of ignorant minds, let them understand that it is always the latter, and never the former, which is satirised here. Further, that the latter is here satirised as being, according to all experience, inconsistent with the former, impossible of union with it, and one of the most evil and mischievous falsehoods existent in society — whether it establish its headquarters, for the time being, in Exeter Hall, or Ebenezer Chapel, or both. It may appear unnecessary to offer a word of observation on so plain a head. But it is never out of season to protest against that coarse familiarity with sacred things which is busy on the lip, and idle in the heart; or against the confounding of Christianity with any class of persons who, in the words of Swift, have just enough religion to make them hate, and not enough to make them love, one another.' [26]

If there was any one form of ostentatious piety that Dickens hated more than another, it was that of the long-faced variety. To him the combination of gloom with religion constituted a frightful blasphemy, and he recurs to it so often that it would seem to have been almost a mania with him.[27] When hard or unsympathetic people engaged in religious teaching, it always seemed to him that their lives belied their words to such an extent that they achieved far more harm than good.[28] Once he actually accuses the gloomy saints of having abused their own youth and thus

unfitted themselves for pleasure: therefore they now find their revenge in denouncing the innocent amusements of others![29]

In Dickens's novels, there are many representatives of gloomy religion. Way back in the 'Sketches by Boz' are the three Miss Willises[30] and Nicodemus Bumps. Of the latter it is recorded that 'He subscribed to the "Society for the Suppression of Vice" for the pleasure of putting a stop to any harmless amusements; and he contributed largely towards the support of two itinerant methodist pastors, in the amiable hope that if circumstances rendered any people happy in this world, they might perchance be rendered miserable by fears for the next.'[31] Miggs, in 'Barnaby,' 'hates and despises herself and all her fellow-creatures as every practicable Christian should.'[32] Of Esther Summerson's aunt it is recorded that 'She was so very good herself . . . that the badness of other people made her frown all her life.'[33] David Copperfield has a taste of something very like this in his experience of the Murdstone religion.[34] In 'George Silverman's Explanation' there is a horrible description of the 'delighted snarl' with which Brother Gimblet 'used to detail from the platform the torments reserved for the wicked.'[35] But it is in Mrs. Clennam, of 'Little Dorrit,' Mrs. Clennam with her gloomy Sundays, her vindictiveness, her bitterness of spirit, her vain, calculating attempt to strike a bargain with God, that Dickens has made his most elaborate study of religious gloom, and here he leaves us in no doubt whatever that Mrs. Clennam's point of view seems to him on an exact level with idolatry and blasphemy.[36]

One special form of religious intolerance that greatly an-

noyed Dickens was that which expresses itself in Sabbatarian legislation.[37] This spirit of coercion in connection with religion always seemed to him un-Christian, inhuman, and likely, above everything else, to destroy genuine reverence. This does not at all mean that Dickens wished to see the Sabbath wholly secularized, for when he went to Paris, the French Sunday was exceedingly shocking to him.[38] Only, abundant restrictions did not seem to him likely to bring nearer the end sought.

Indeed, formal religious exercises in general made little appeal to Dickens. He attended church because he appreciated the value of the church in fostering the religious life of mankind, but he was often bored there. The religious value of ritual for him seems to have been about zero.[39] Nor did preaching interest him much more.[40] Sometimes he inclined to think that church services would be more interesting if, instead of preaching, the clergyman were simply to read the New Testament, or narrate the wonderful story it tells.[41] Like many men who enjoy talking a good deal themselves, he did not always enjoy sitting still to listen to other men talk, and Mrs. Fields records his saying that he would enjoy sermons much more if he might be allowed to get up and state his objections![42] At home, Dickens prided himself on teaching the essentials of religion without any emphasis whatever upon its form. He was completely free from denominationalism: although he was a member of the Church of England, he disliked anything savoring of exclusivism in that body quite as much as anywhere else, and at one time his dissatisfaction with it was so great that he took sittings for a few years in a Unitarian Chapel.[43]

With one great phase of Christian activity in the nine-

teenth century, it must be admitted Dickens was fundamentally out of sympathy, and that was the missionary movement. Mr. Stiggins, in 'The Pickwick Papers' — Stiggins with his 'noble society for providing the infant negroes in the West Indies with flannel waistcoats and moral pocket handkerchiefs' [44] — might, if he stood alone, be dismissed as so much good fun, but he does not stand alone. In 'Bleak House,' the fatuous Mrs. Jellyby, spending all her time in the interests of Borrioboola-Gha on the left bank of the Niger while her family goes to rack and ruin around her, is clearly drawn with malicious intent, to say nothing for the moment of the helpless Jo, starving, body and soul, under the very nose of a complacent and indifferent plutocracy. 'To change the customs even of civilized and educated men, and impress them with new ideas, is — we have good need to know it — a most difficult and slow proceeding; but to do this by ignorant and savage races, is a work which, like the progressive changes of the globe itself, requires a stretch of years that dazzles in the looking at. It is not, we conceive, within the providence of God, that Christianity shall start to the banks of the Niger, until it shall have overflowed all the intervening space.' [45]

In short, where missions were concerned, Dickens seems to have felt not only that charity should begin at home, but that it should end there. It is not difficult to see why. He had little intellectual vision, little power to visualize that which was wholly outside his experience. The world in which he moved, geographically and spiritually, was not large. Consequently he never really understood the missionary movement or realized its claims. On the other hand, he felt, more keenly than many men of his time, the necessity for

social reform at home. 'I am decidedly of opinion that the two works, the home and the foreign, are not conducted with an equal hand, and that the home claim is by far the stronger and the more pressing of the two.'[46] When the claim that he did not understand got in the way of that which he did understand, it was inevitable that his decision should be just the one he made.

III

So, like the rest of us, in religious as well as in secular matters, he was not always unfailingly sympathetic toward the things he failed to comprehend. For example, he believed strenuously in religious toleration. Sometimes he exemplified it nobly. Toward the Unitarians[47] and the Jews,[48] both of whom it was still 'Christian' to be suspicious of and unfriendly toward in his day, he was always consistently sympathetic. And the mere idea of religious persecution or religious conflict always awakened all his horror.[49] Yet it is clear enough that certain forms of religious faith and practice irritated Dickens, and he was not always courteous in his attitude toward them.

To begin with, there were the dissenters. Dickens is generally accused of intolerance toward dissenters in general. And in truth, there is a long line of contemptible religionists of the dissenting persuasion filing their way through his books. Witness Stiggins in 'Pickwick';[50] Little Bethel and its devotees in 'The Old Curiosity Shop';[51] the Reverend Melchisedech Howler and his disciple Mrs. MacStinger in 'Dombey and Son';[52] Mr. Chadband in 'Bleak House';[53] Brother Hawkyard and Brother Gimblet in 'George Silverman's Explanation.' But it should be carefully

observed that no creedal or doctrinal prejudice inspired these portraits. Only, as I have already pointed out, Dickens detested whatever savored of the pietistic. Ostentatious piety was somewhat more common among dissenters than among Anglicans: hence his unfriendly portraits.[54]

Then, far away from the dissenters, there were the Spiritualists. Here, though he refers to the matter frequently, Dickens cannot be called really intolerant, for he stipulates carefully that he in no way denies the possibility of the return of spirits or their communication with humanity. He has no desire to define what shall be possible and impossible with God. Only, his intelligence is offended by the puerility of the messages which the Spiritualists purport to have received, and he considers them degrading, not only to human intellect, but to the souls of the dead as well.[55]

When he got to America, Dickens came in contact with two new sects, the Shakers and the Mormons. Toward the Shakers he is nearly savage in his antagonism, almost refusing to concede that they belong to the same species as himself.[56] Their attitude toward sex appears to him as a blasphemy against life, while the somber quality of their daily living stamps them as enemies of all the things that bless humanity and make life fair. In the 'American Notes,' he speaks harshly, too, of the Mormons.[57] Later, however, returning to the topic in 'The Uncommercial Traveller,' he is much more kindly disposed. 'To suppose the family groups of whom the majority of emigrants were composed, polygamically possessed, would be to suppose an absurdity, manifest to any one who saw the fathers and mothers.' [58]

Of all Dickens's religious prejudices, that against the Roman Catholics is, however, the most pronounced. He

makes no attempt whatever to pretend that he is judicial in this matter. Thus, in the preface to 'Barnaby Rudge,' referring to the 'No Popery' riots described in that book, he says: 'However imperfectly these disturbances are set forth in the following pages, they are impartially painted by one who has no sympathies with the Roman Church, although he acknowledges, as most men do, some esteemed friends among the followers of its creed.' [59]

References to Catholic ceremonial in Dickens's novels are rarely respectful. Thus there is the description of the Mass in 'Pictures from Italy': 'this same Heart beating with the same monotonous pulsation, the centre of the same torpid, listless system.' [60] I have already referred to Dickens's dislike of ritual in general: it would have been strange if the Mass had made any very marked appeal to him. Indeed, I think it safe to say that Dickens appreciated nothing of the Mass except the theatrical effect sometimes connected with it. On one special occasion he speaks of it as follows: 'There was, certainly, nothing solemn or effective in it; and certainly very much that was droll and tawdry. But this remark applies to the whole ceremony, except the raising of the Host, when every man in the guard dropped on one knee instantly, and dashed his naked sword on the ground; which had a fine effect.' [61]

Other Catholic ceremonies, as he saw them abroad, did not impress him more. When he witnessed the papal foot-washing in Rome, he fancied that he saw the Cardinals smiling at each other, 'as if the thing were a great farce; and if they thought so, there is little doubt they were perfectly right.' [62] Of the kneeling ascent of the holy staircase on Good Friday, he observed: 'I never, in my life, saw anything

at once so ridiculous, and so unpleasant, as this sight — ridiculous in the absurd incidents inseparable from it; and unpleasant in its senseless and unmeaning degradation.' [63] At Milan he saw a dead saint 'in an alabaster case, with sparkling jewels all about him to mock his dusty eyes, not to mention the twenty-franc pieces which devout votaries were ringing down upon a sort of skylight in the cathedral pavement above, as if it were the counter of his heavenly shop.' [64] In 'Our Mutual Friend,' the waiter who serves John and Bella's wedding dinner, 'conferring in secrecy with John Rokesmith on the subject of punch and wines, bent his head as though stooping to the Papistical practice of receiving auricular confession.' [65]

Dickens's dislike of Catholicism, however, was not, any more than his dislike of the dissenters, based on strictly religious grounds. It was determined to a much larger extent by his feeling that Catholicism was not a progressive religion and that it involved social degradation. How firmly ingrained this conviction was may be inferred in part from the incidental and wholly unnecessary remark he saw fit to insert in the 'Preface to the First Cheap Edition' of 'American Notes,' where, discussing another subject altogether, he suddenly switches off to remark: 'The earth would still move round the sun, though the whole Catholic Church said No.' [66] When he went to Switzerland, he found that the Protestant cantons were in every way better off, happier, and more progressive than the Catholic cantons, and this did not tend to increase his respect for Catholicism. 'On the Protestant side, neatness; cheerfulness; industry; education; continual aspiration, at least, after better things. On the Catholic side, dirt, disease, ignorance, squalor, and misery.

I have so constantly observed the like of this, since I first came abroad, that I have a sad misgiving that the religion of Ireland lies as deep at the root of all its sorrows, even as English government and Tory villainy.' [67]

It would be very unfair, however, to leave the impression that Dickens was in any sense a rabid anti-Catholic or that he would consciously have discriminated against a Catholic in any way. He perceived clearly the injustice of attempting to force the Establishment on Catholic Ireland,[68] and he always tried not to blame either Catholics or Protestants for the wrongs committed by unscrupulous men in their names.[69] In 'Barnaby Rudge' the problem enters his fiction, and here it certainly cannot be claimed that Dickens's presentation of the Catholic side is unfair. All the villains in the book are Protestants, and the 'No Popery' riots stand out clearly as a wicked and disastrous blunder. Specifically, Mr. Haredale, the Catholic, is consistently glorified as against the very Protestant Chester. In 'The Old Curiosity Shop' also there is a delightful bit of satire on the anti-Catholic in the description of Mrs. Jarley's waxworks: 'Certain machinery in the body of the nun on the leads over the door was cleaned up and put in motion, so that the figure shook its head paralytically all day long, to the great admiration of a drunken, but very Protestant, barber over the way, who looked upon the said paralytic motion as typical of the degrading effect wrought upon the human mind by the ceremonies of the Romish Church, and discoursed upon the theme with great eloquence and morality.' [70] As for Dickens's curious Genoese dream, when Mary's spirit appeared to him, and in reply to his question as to which was the true religion, replied that for him the Catholic faith was best, as

tending to make one 'think of God oftener, and believe in him more steadily,' I must leave the interpretation of that to the psycho-analysts and to Mr. Bechhofer Roberts![71]

On the whole, it is not difficult to see why Dickens should have had so little sympathy with Catholicism. His was, after all, a very English mind, and as such it inherited suspicion of 'Romanism' from more than three centuries of history. He was interested only in the problems of the present: he had little historic sense. Form made no appeal to him. Thus the spell which the Catholic Church, through its ritual, its beauty, and its wonderful sense of the continuity of the religious tradition, casts over so many who are quite unable to share its creed, did not exist for him.

IV

One of the most striking aspects of Dickens's religious experience is the almost entire absence from his life of any suggestion of spiritual struggle. This is the more unusual since he lived in a time of great mental and spiritual readjustment, when the devoutest Christians had to struggle hard to possess their faith, harmonizing the old, long-cherished truths with the new conceptions of life and the universe then being put forth in the name of science. One says nothing, for the moment, of such characteristic men of their time as Matthew Arnold and Arthur Hugh Clough — neither of them is so much as mentioned in Dickens's correspondence — who, though temperamentally among the most intensely religious men that have ever lived, struggled all their lives in search of God, and yet never felt that they had found Him and possessed Him in anything like a wholly satisfactory way. But there were others, like Dickens's

great admiration, Alfred Tennyson, who, though they did find God, found him only after a long and arduous struggle. And even Browning, so outstandingly and triumphantly the poet of faith, was not wholly untouched by the current of the day: even Browning wrote that

> You must mix some uncertainty with faith
> If you would have faith be.

Not so Dickens. Forster, indeed, tells us that at one time he was troubled by doubts — whether of religion itself or of the choice between different forms of religious expression is not made clear — and that the book which helped him most in this contingency was the 'Life' of Arnold.[72] This is delightfully vague, though I presume Arthur Penrhyn Stanley's 'The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold' is the book referred to. Occasionally you do find Dickens somewhat oppressed in mind by the inexplicable injustices of life, usually (and characteristically) the sufferings of children.[73] But he had no head for metaphysics,[74] and he did not believe in blaming God for what man had ordained; so, on the whole, it always seemed more sensible to him, as no doubt it is, to do the little you can to relieve the conditions which cause suffering than to expend your energies in fruitless wondering how it all came about. All in all, the words which Frank T. Marzials wrote long ago with regard to Dickens's religious experience, still stand as substantially true: 'There is no evidence in his life, no evidence in his letters, no evidence in his books, that he had ever seen any cause to question the truth of the reply which Christianity gives to the world-old problems of man's origin and destiny. For abstract speculation he had not the slightest turn or

taste. In no single one of his characters does he exhibit any fierce mental struggle as between truth and error. All that side of human experience, with its anguish of battle, its despairs, and its triumphs, seems to have been unknown to him. Perhaps he had the stronger grasp of other matters in consequence — who knows? But the fact remains. With a trust quite simple and untroubled, he held through life to the faith of Christ.' [75]

But it was not only the new discoveries in science that troubled the men of Dickens's time as they struggled to believe in God. For not only was Evolution on the horizon, but the new historical method of Biblical scholarship was just coming into vogue, and with it arose all the problems that are generally summed up under the term: the Higher Criticism. Well, the Higher Criticism never worried Dickens any more than science did, nor could he ever understand why it should form any barrier to faith. The idea that God's revelation of Himself to humanity was finished, that it belonged to the past alone and was bound up between the covers of the Bible, was an idea that was always intolerably repugnant to him, and he regarded the truth which comes to us through science or through daily life as quite as valid, quite as worthy of reverent reception as the truth that comes from the Bible itself.[76] The very genius of Protestantism always seemed to him a spirit of freedom and of absolutely untrammeled inquiry.[77]

The conclusions of the Higher Criticism, so far as he was familiar with them, were perhaps less shocking to Dickens than they would otherwise have been, because he had independently made up his mind that the Bible was not infallible, and, specifically, that the Old Testament had long

since been definitely superseded by the New. The spirit of Christ was the norm by which everything that concerned religion was tested: whatever opposed or contradicted the spirit of Christ could not be right, whether it were found in the Bible or somewhere else. And if you had asked him how he was going to find the spirit of Christ, he would not have shrunk from the reply which the Fundamentalists, even to-day, find so dangerous: that he would seek it through his own intelligent reading and study of the Scriptures that tell the story of his life. In the last analysis, then, he was thrown back, as we all are, upon his own understanding, for he rejected the proof-text method entirely, and depended instead upon general impressions and emotions.[78] The somber or inhuman aspects of religion, in so far as they survived in his day, seemed to him largely inspired by the non-Christian portions of the Bible, and Little Dorrit has this idea in mind when she urges Mrs. Clennam to put aside the God of the Old Testament and be guided by the God of the New.[79] 'Half the misery and hypocrisy of the Christian world,' Dickens writes to Frank Stone, 'arises (as I take it) from a stubborn determination to refuse the New Testament as a sufficient guide in itself, and to force the Old Testament into alliance with it — whereof comes all manner of camel-swallowing and of gnat-straining.'[80] And Mrs. Fields preserves the record of at least one occasion on which Dickens essayed the rôle of the higher critic himself: 'At last they came to the book, "Ecce Homo," in which Dickens can see nothing of value, any more than we. He thinks Jesus foresaw and guarded as well as he could against the misinterpreting of his teaching, that the four Gospels are all derived from some anterior written Scriptures — made up, perhaps, with ad-

ditions and interpretations from the "Talmud," in which he expressed great interest and admiration. Among other things which prove how little the Gospels should be taken literally is the fact that *broad phylacteries* were not in use until some years after Jesus lived, so that the passage in which this reference occurs, at least, must only be taken as conveying the spirit and temper, not the actual form of speech, of our Lord. Mr. Dickens spoke reverently and earnestly, and said much more if I could recall it perfectly.' [81]

Perhaps Dickens was assisted in rejecting the doctrine of Biblical infallibility by the bad habit some of his contemporaries had of quoting Bible texts in support of established evils which the God in him told him must be wrong. Mr. Podsnap's opposition to the social survey on the ground that the Bible has declared that we always have the poor with us, and that therefore any attempt to abolish poverty means flying in the face of Providence,[82] is burlesque, of course, but is there no parallel to it in your experience? There was more than one in Dickens's. In 1842, in America, a slavery advocate asked him whether he believed in the Bible. 'Yes, I said, but if any man could prove to me that it sanctioned slavery, I would place no further credence in it.' [83] Later on he was not quite so sure that the Bible did not sanction slavery and other evils, but it did not seem to him, therefore, that he must either give up opposing these evils or else relinquish his faith in the Bible. Here again the spirit of Christ was his criterion: 'It is enough for me to be satisfied, on calm inquiry and with reason, that an Institution or Custom is wrong and bad; and thence to feel assured that IT CANNOT BE a part of the law laid down by the Divinity who walked the earth. Though every other man who wields a

pen should turn himself into a commentator on the Scriptures — not all their united efforts, pursued through our united lives, could ever persuade me that Slavery is a Christian law; nor, with one of these objections to an execution in my certain knowledge, that Executions are a Christian law, my will is not concerned. I could not, in my veneration for the life and lessons of Our Lord, believe it. If any text appeared to justify the claim, I would reject that limited appeal, and rest upon the character of the Redeemer, and the great scheme of his Religion, where, in its broad spirit, made so plain — and not this or that disputed letter — we all put our trust. . . . We know that the law of Moses was delivered to certain wandering tribes, in a peculiar and perfectly different social condition from that which prevails among us at this time. We know that the Christian Dispensation did distinctly repeal and annul certain portions of that law.' [84]

Here, it seems to me, Dickens definitely and grandly rejects the religion of authority for a religion of life. The God who lives between the covers of a book comes to seem of less importance than the God who takes up his abode in the hearts of men, speaking to them through conscience and common-sense.

That God lives, however, in the fundamental human instincts and emotions as shared by all men, and not primarily in the special equipment of any particular group of men whatever. Thus, while Dickens was never *disturbed* by the Higher Criticism, he would never have regarded scholarship as in any way necessary or fundamental to the understanding of the Bible. It would be impossible for any reader to approach the Bible less scientifically than did Captain Cuttle,

yet Dickens makes it perfectly clear that nobody could read it with clearer spiritual insight. 'On Sunday nights, the Captain always read for himself, before going to bed, a certain Divine Sermon, once delivered on a Mount; and although he was accustomed to quote the text, without book, after his own manner, he appeared to read it with as reverent an understanding of its heavenly spirit, as if he had got it all by heart in Greek, and had been able to write any number of fierce theological disputations on its every phrase.' [85] The really great truths of religion, Dickens thought, were intended for the benefit of all men, and were apprehensible by all, regardless of their intelligence, even by such as Jo in 'Bleak House,' and when the Jos of the world fail to understand them, as they commonly do, it means simply that somebody has been remiss in the duty of simply and lovingly presenting them.[86] On his first American tour, a man brought Dickens the Lord's Prayer, written in twenty-four different languages. 'Ah, twenty-four languages!' exclaimed Dickens. 'One would be sufficient, if men would only live that prayer.' [87]

V

But true religion, after all, is much more a matter of feeling than a matter of thinking, and much more significant for my purpose in this book than any specific formulation on Dickens's part of his *religious opinions* are those little casual touches in his life and work which show how thoroughly religion was a part of his being and how inseparable it was from his conception of life. Perhaps the very best testimonial to this statement is the very one I cannot present here — that is, the general spirit of his novels and the ex-

emplification of the Christian virtues that they contain. Choosing almost at random, I may, however, present a few illustrations.[88]

Like all truly reverent minds, Dickens found it impossible to shake off those indefinable impressions which come to many of us, of the mystery and wonder, the unfathomable strangeness of life. You may call such things superstition if you will, and in their cruder manifestations they undoubtedly are, but you may just as well call the instinct that prompts them reverence, and until the pathway to the stars — or the pathway of the soul — is fully and exhaustively charted, human beings will not be able altogether to get away from them. The peculiar quality of Dickens's nineteenth century, middle-class mind, and the conditions of the life he lived, were not such as to make him particularly susceptible to this sort of thing: it is therefore all the more definitely a testimonial to his religious sensitiveness that there should be some such suggestions. Such, for example, is the speculation in 'David Copperfield' on the subject of preëxistence,[89] as well as David's own impression that when Em'ly in her childhood ran recklessly into danger, it may have been that a kind Providence was tempting her to her death, in order to save her from a life of shame.[90] Less crude than that and more impressive is the saying of the doctor in 'The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices': 'There are mysteries in life, and the condition of it, which human science has not fathomed yet; and I cordially confess to you, that, in bringing that man back to existence, I was, morally speaking, groping haphazard in the dark.'[91]

Again, Dickens sees the divine aspects of man and of Nature, feels the power of the Life infusing all. When he

stood beside Niagara: 'Then, when I felt how near to my Creator I was standing, the first effect, and the enduring one — instant and lasting — of the tremendous spectacle, was Peace. Peace of Mind, tranquillity, calm recollections of the Dead, great thoughts of Eternal Rest and Happiness: nothing of gloom or terror. Niagara was at once stamped upon my heart, an Image of Beauty; to remain there, changeless and indelible, until its pulses cease to beat, for ever.' [92]

Even when he speaks of 'Nature' rather than of 'God,' he assumes that the Power is benevolent, as here, in the pathetic description of Sydney Carton and the little seamstress: 'Eye to eye, voice to voice, hand to hand, heart to heart, these two children of the Universal Mother, else so wide apart and differing, had come together on the dark highway, to repair home together, and to rest in her bosom.' [93]

God's comfort comes to humanity through the commonest experiences of life. Take this tender passage from 'Bleak House,' in which Esther recognizes the healing power of Ada's baby: 'The help that my dear counted on, did come to her; though it came, in the Eternal Wisdom, for another purpose. Though to bless and restore his mother, not his father, was the errand of this baby, its power was mighty to do it. When I saw the strength of the weak little hand, and how its touch could heal my darling's heart, and raise up hope within her, I felt a new sense of the goodness and the tenderness of God.' [94]

As for humanity, it keeps, even when degraded, some suggestions of its divine nature. Harriet Carker feels this as she looks at Alice Marwood: 'She thought of all that was perverted and debased within her, no less than without: of

modest graces of the mind, hardened and steeled, like those attractions of the person; of the many gifts of the Creator flung to the winds like the wild hair; of all the beautiful ruin upon which the storm was beating and the night was coming.' Incidentally, through this description, and the religious significance that invests it, we touch the source of Dickens's sympathy for humanity; for it was because of her perception of these things that Harriet 'did not turn away with a delicate indignation — too many of her own compassionate and tender sex often do — but pitied her.' [95]

As for the Christian virtues of sacrifice and forgiveness, the former received in 'A Tale of Two Cities' one of its classical exemplifications, and the latter is abundantly illustrated in Dickens, never more so than in 'The Pickwick Papers,' where Mr. Pickwick's forgiveness of Job Trotter,[96] and the elder Weller's kindly remembrance of his shrewish wife [97] are all the more touching because they come in the midst of abandoned hilarity. With these should be considered Florence Dombey's forgiveness of her father,[98] Esther's kindness toward Lady Dedlock,[99] John Peerybingle's magnanimity toward his wife when he believes her unfaithful,[100] Pip's generosity toward Miss Havisham,[101] Mrs. Lirriper's forgiveness of Miss Wozenham and of Jemmy's sinful father,[102] and the strange conclusion of 'The Haunted Man' — that we should remember wrong so that we may forgive it.[103]

There is not much in Dickens which involves theological speculation, but there are two remarkable passages in 'The Old Curiosity Shop' which seem to imply a rather definite faith on his part in a spiritual economy governing the world. The first passage occurs in Chapter 54, where the school-

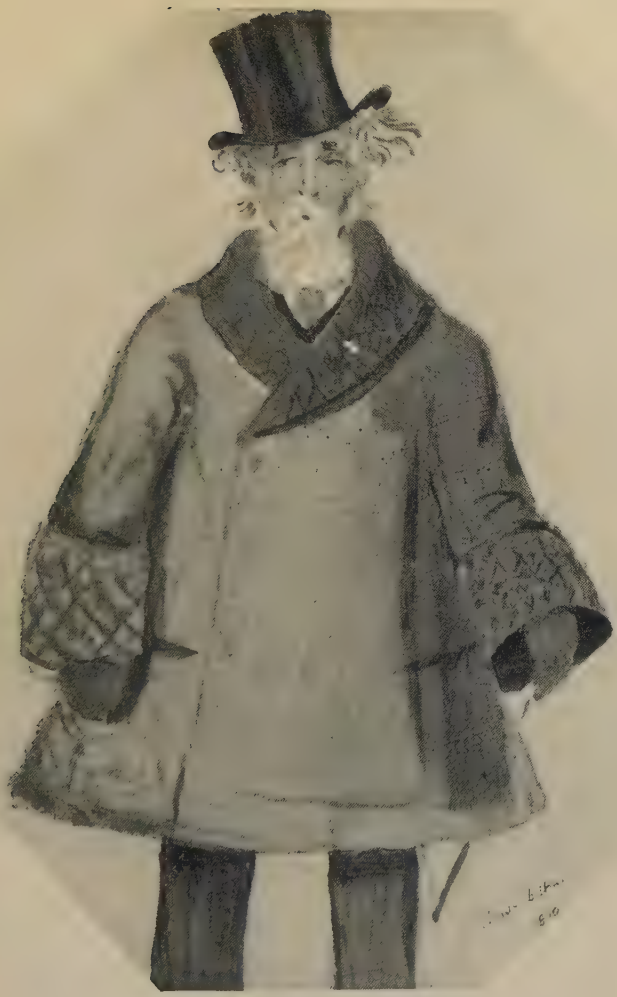
master is comforting Nell as she grieves over the graves in the churchyard:

'"And do you think," said the schoolmaster, marking the glance she had thrown around, "that an unvisited grave, a withered tree, a faded flower or two, are tokens of forgetfulness or cold neglect? Do you think there are no deeds, far away from here, in which these dead may be best remembered? Nell, Nell, there may be people busy in the world, at this instant, in whose good actions and good thoughts these very graves — neglected as they look to us — are the chief instruments."

'"Tell me no more," said the child quickly. "Tell me no more. I feel, I know it. How could *I* be unmindful of it, when I thought of you?"

'"There is nothing," cried her friend, "no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten. Let us hold to that faith, or none. An infant, a prattling child, dying in its cradle, will live again in the better thoughts of those who loved it, and will play its part, through them, in the redeeming actions of the world, though its body be burnt to ashes or drowned in the deepest sea. There is not an angel added to the Host of Heaven but does its blessed work on earth in those that loved it here. Forgotten! oh, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautiful would even death appear; for how much charity, mercy, and purified affection, would be seen to have their growth in dusty graves!'" [104]

The other passage refers to Nell herself as she lies dead: 'Oh! it is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach, but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn, and is a mighty, universal Truth. When Death strikes



CHARLES DICKENS, 1870
A sketch (from memory) by 'Spy' (Leslie Ward)

down the innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven.' [105]

Almost the very last letter Dickens ever wrote was an expression of his Christian faith. To a correspondent who had written concerning what seemed to him like a bit of irreverence in one of his books, the great novelist replied — Christian man to Christian man — expressing his regret that such a signification, wholly unintended by himself, should have been attached to the passage in question. 'I have always striven in my writings to express veneration for the life and lessons of Our Saviour; because I feel it; and because I re-wrote that history for my children — every one of whom knew it from having it repeated to them — long before they could read, and almost as soon as they could speak. But I have never made proclamation of this from the house tops.' [106] There is no doubt that it was very close to him, nevertheless, and the only sure comfort in time of trouble. 'I do not preach consolation because I am unwilling to preach at any time, and know my own weakness too well. But in this world there is no stay but the hope of a better, and no reliance but on the mercy and goodness of God. Through these two harbours of a shipwrecked heart, I fully believe that you will, in time, find a peaceful resting-place even on this careworn earth.' [107]

VI

I have no wish, however, to make Dickens's religious experience seem any deeper and profounder than it actually was. We Dickensians, much as we love him, have never felt it necessary to glorify him overmuch. As an artist, we have always placed him in the front rank of the second order — never, as with Shakespeare, Dante, Lucretius, and a few others — among the supremely great creators among humankind. No more is it necessary, in this picture of his religious experience, to pretend that he deserves to be enrolled with the great mystics and the great saints. He was simply a practical, thoroughly modern, nineteenth-century Englishman who found in the Christian dynamic and the Christian ideal the best solution to the problems of life. The supreme heights of mystical union with God were not for him, nor do I find any indication that he understood them or desired them.

There were several things that religion was never able to do for Dickens. It never brought him peace. All his life he was conscious of wanting something, restless, searching for a satisfaction he never found. Doubtless this condition was immensely accentuated by his domestic unhappiness, but its roots lie deeper than that, in the driving restlessness of his nature.[108]

Again, religion never freed him from the fear of death. It is true that in his novels he frequently sees the cycle of life and accepts it without bitterness, as when Sydney Carton looks forward to Lucie as 'an old woman, weeping for me on the anniversary of this day. I see her and her husband, their course done, lying side by side in their last earthly bed, and I know that each was not more honoured and held

sacred in the other's soul, than I was in the souls of both.' [109] But this is largely a matter of literary convention: it was customary to dispose of characters at the end of a Victorian novel.

In any event, interpret them as you will, references to death and the fear and the horror of it are scattered all through Dickens's writing. 'Contact with death even in its least terrible shape, is solemn and appalling.' [110] When he heard of Professor Felton's passing, he exclaimed: 'Alas! alas! all ways have the same finger-post at the head of them, and at every turning in them.' [111] The very last time he saw Forster, he spoke mournfully of the many friends they had lost too soon. 'It does no good to talk of it,' said Forster. And Dickens replied, 'We shall not think of it the less.' [112] He was thinking of it, not only for them, but for himself. Shortly before his death, too, he was walking with a friend, who remarked suddenly of 'Edwin Drood,' 'Well, you or we, are approaching the mystery.' Dickens, who had been all vivacity a moment before, now fell into a brown study, and did not speak again during the remainder of the walk.[113] Yet, strangely enough — or perhaps naturally enough — the idea of death fascinated Dickens even while it repelled him, and the Uncommercial Traveller's account of his visit to the Paris Morgue is quite horrible enough.[114]

Here again, however, the best evidence is the most indirect. Dickens's horror and dislike of funerals,[115] his dread of coming to the end of anything, his fear of approaching age, and his intense dislike of saying good-bye — all these are so many indications of the fear of death. His daughter tells us that he 'had such an intense dislike for leave-taking that he always, when it was possible, shirked a farewell, and we

children, knowing this dislike, used only to wave our hands or give him a silent kiss when parting.' [116] And he himself tells us in his own words that he is 'such a coward in the matter of good-bye, that I never say it, and would resort to almost any subterfuge to avoid it.' [117] Much as he loved his grandchildren, he dreaded the relationship in which he stood to them and never allowed them to call him grandfather. 'I make the mites believe that my lawful name is "Wenerables," which they piously believe.' [118] In his early life, he once started to keep a diary. But he soon gave it up. 'I grow sad over this checking off of days, and can't do it.' [119] This implies no inconsistency with what I have said before concerning the surety of Dickens's faith in immortality. He did not think of death as the end of Charles Dickens, but he loved the life of this world far too much to be able to think of breaking ties with it without a pang.

Moreover, not only did religion fail to save Dickens from the fear of death: it was not always and by itself a sure refuge here. If, as Ibsen felt, the strongest man is he who stands absolutely alone, then Dickens was a weak man. 'It was his defect as well as his merit in maturer life,' says Forster, '*not to be able to live alone.*' [120] God was not enough for him. He did not feel, with the saints, that having Christ he had all. He must have human smiles before his eyes and human hands to touch him. Whatever he knew of God he must find in that way. On this aspect of Dickens, Forster's is still the acutest bit of analysis we have: 'Not his genius only, but his whole nature, was too exclusively made up of sympathy for, and with, the real in its most intense form, to be sufficiently provided against failure in the realities around him. There was for him no "city of the mind" against out-

ward ills, for inner consolation and shelter. It was in and from the actual he still stretched forth to find the freedom and satisfactions of an ideal, and by his very attempts to escape the world, he was driven back into the thick of it. But what he would have sought there, it supplies to none; and to get the infinite out of anything so finite, has broken many a stout heart.' [121]

The truth of the matter is that Dickens was not really an idealist. He was too thoroughly human to be an idealist in anything like an absolute way. For ideals are cruel things, and the higher they are, the more ruthlessly they are inclined to crush the human lives that get in their way. That is a significant passage in 'A Tale of Two Cities,' where Doctor Manette rises before the Revolutionary tribunal in the defense of Darnay:

'"Citizen Manette, be tranquil. To fail in submission to the authority of the Tribunal would be to put yourself out of Law. As to what is dearer to you than life, nothing can be so dear to a good citizen as the Republic."

'Loud acclamations hailed this rebuke. The President rang his bell, and with warmth resumed.

'"If the Republic should demand of you the sacrifice of your child herself, you would have no duty but to sacrifice her. Listen to what is to follow. In the meanwhile, be silent!"' [122]

It would be easy to overlook that passage as merely a rebuke to fanaticism, but is it? These people were fighting the battle for human rights: there is no question about that. And, furthermore, is not the fanatic always an idealist at heart, and does he not commit terrible crimes against humanity simply because he vaunts the claims of his ideal

wholly out of consideration for the practical exigencies of the moment? Dickens believed in the fundamental justice of the Revolutionary cause, but he believed, far more deeply, with Storm Jameson, that 'Kindness makes anything bearable, but it's the last mystery of God.' [123] It would be difficult to get farther away from idealism than that.

This passage from 'A Tale of Two Cities' does not stand alone in Dickens as illustrating his suspicion of all idealism that is likely to involve human suffering. One of the least interesting portions of his 'Child's History of England' is his account of Joan of Arc. Although he does not slander her, the best he can say of her is this: 'Ah! happy had it been for the Maid of Orleans, if she had resumed her rustic dreams that day, and had gone home to the little chapel and the wild hills, and had forgotten all these things, and had been a good man's wife, and had heard no stranger voices than the voices of little children!' [124] Unfortunately, Joan of Arc and people of her temperament are never primarily interested in the things that will make them 'happy.' They are never happy until they share the agony of God.

But we must recur to the Shakers for our best illustration of Dickens's dislike of idealism at the expense of humanity. We need not pause over the fact that these people are fanatics, here any more than in the case of the Revolutionary tribunal: the primary significance of the passage is its expression of his love of the everyday graces and pleasures of life:

'This is well enough, but nevertheless I cannot, I confess, incline towards the Shakers; view them with much favour, or extend to them any very lenient construction. I so abhor, and from my soul detest that bad spirit, no matter by what

class or sect it may be entertained, that would strip life of its healthful graces, rob youth of its innocent pleasures, pluck from maturity and age their pleasant ornaments, and make existence but a narrow path towards the grave: that odious spirit which, if it could have had full scope and sway upon the earth, must have blasted and made barren the imaginations of the greatest men, and left them, in their power of raising up enduring images before their fellow-creatures yet unborn, no better than the beasts; that, in these very broad-brimmed hats and very sombre coats — in stiff-necked, solemn-visaged piety, in short, no matter what its garb, whether it have cropped hair as in a Shaker village, or long nails as in a Hindoo temple — I recognize the worst among the enemies of Heaven and Earth, who turn the water at the marriage feasts of this poor world, not into wine, but gall. And if there must be people vowed to crush the harmless fancies and the love of innocent delights and gaieties, which are a part of human nature: as much a part of it as any other love or hope that is our common portion: let them, for me, stand openly revealed among the ribald and licentious; the very idiots know that *they* are not on the immortal road, and will despise them, and avoid them readily.' [125]

In Shelton MacKenzie's unreliable 'Life of Dickens,' there are two stories which bear somewhat on this matter of Dickens's religion. According to one, Dickens is supposed to have told Walter Savage Landor that he had modeled his style on the New Testament.[126] This is somewhat surprising. Still Dickens *might* have said it, reverently. It is not impossible, and I do not feel very strongly on the subject, one way or the other. The other anecdote is a different matter altogether. When he was in America in 1868, Dickens is

supposed to have replied, in answer to a question about what was the object of his writing, 'It is to show that all men may be saved.' [127] This I simply do not believe at all: indeed, it is so ridiculous that it hardly merits discussion. Unquestionably there are passages in Dickens's novels of which this might be said, and unquestionably he would have been glad to hear that any of these had exercised a salutary effect, but for anybody to make such a statement with reference to the richly varied body of Dickens's work in general would be utterly absurd, while put into the mouth of Dickens himself, who so cordially detested every form of pious cant, the words simply will not do at all.

Here, then, as I see it, ends the story of Charles Dickens's attempt to adjust his life to God. His was not the profoundest religious experience that has been vouchsafed to our frail clay: neither was it by any means the shallowest. If he did not live for God as the saints live for Him, neither did he live for the vulgar rewards of success and applause and fame. He was in the grip of the creative gift that God gave him, and he devoted himself in obedience to its demands. Nobody can say that he failed to make the most of a great talent. Perhaps that was his primary business in the world.

John Forster's consciousness of the spiritual weaknesses in his friend has already been referred to. It should not be omitted that Forster was fully aware that the very weakness was often a source of strength. Kindliness and consideration, domestic peace and comfort, the joys of home and of honest human affection — if they are not the very highest things 'that God has ordained for our beatitude,' still they are His, and they are good, and they have their place, in literature and in life. If Dickens had been Dante or Leo-

nardo or Saint Francis, he would have been a greater man than he actually was, no doubt, but he would not have been Dickens, and the joys and the blessings that His genius has given humanity, we should never have known.

He did not climb the frozen heights — in art, in love, or in faith. How many do? One thinks of a few great artists who, for a little while at the end of life, have grasped the supreme beatitude and known all that there is to know. Not many can do that. Or, rather, not many among the great ones of humanity have done it. As to the unnumbered thousands whose lives are never made a matter of record — who can say? All of us have been privileged to know at least a few of these whose lives were hid with Christ in God — great men and women, despite all the weaknesses of humanity, great souls of whom the world will never hear. Here again one recurs to Storm Jameson: 'The people who love Christ are set apart. Like the soft, glorious Pleiades that keep together in the sky.' [128] There have been men and women, known and unknown, to whom that description applies with greater force than it applies to Charles Dickens, but there is no denying that, as fully as he was able, and within the limitations of his temperament, he loved God and loved Christ — and loved God's children and toiled for them. They, at least, will always be in his debt.

APPENDIX

A NOTE ON THE METHOD OF THIS BOOK

FREQUENT use has been made in the foregoing pages of the terms 'psychograph' and 'psychography.' I have spoken of my friend Mr. Gamaliel Bradford as the inventor and distinguished practitioner of psychography and of this book of mine as the completest and most elaborate specimen of the art that it is now within my power to produce. Before leaving the subject, I should like now to discuss psychography somewhat more fully.

The character sketch as such is, of course, nothing new. Richard Aldington's 'Book of Characters' is here conveniently to remind us that character writing goes back at least as far as Theophrastus, and there never has been any considerable period since when men were not interested in putting the souls of their fellow-men on paper. Indeed, this interest of the human animal in his fellows inspires the novel and the drama quite as definitely as it inspires the character sketch.

Yet about psychography, as we of this generation know it, and as I use the term in this book, there is much more that is new besides the name. The name was coined by Mr. Bradford for himself before he discovered that Professor Saintsbury had already used it in connection with the work of Sainte-Beuve. In the seventeenth century in England there was a veritable outburst of character writing: we have Overbury, Earle, and Hall, to say nothing of Clarendon, who has in his turn served as subject for Mr. Bradford, and many

others somewhat less illustrious. But Bradford's psychographs are not studies of types, like those of Overbury, Earle, and Hall, nor does he, like Clarendon, attempt to estimate his contemporaries from first-hand contact with them. Indeed, his work is much more like that of him whom Saintsbury dubbed psychographer than it is like anything in English literature, and even to-day Mr. Bradford owns Sainte-Beuve as his master. Yet it is a little misleading, I think, that he should do so, for, as he is fully aware, what he owes to the Frenchman is stimulus, inspiration: his method is not Sainte-Beuve's. In short, while there have been character sketches ever since writing began, it has remained for the Bradford psychography to make the character sketch a definite literary form.

Of the characteristics of psychography when thus regarded, the most obvious, perhaps the most important, is its complete disregard of chronology. Each portrait is prefixed by an outline of the most important events in the subject's life. Generally the man is 'placed' in a short paragraph somewhere near the beginning of the paper. But never, as in the old biography, is the subject born on the first page and killed on the last. What is the advantage? Obviously, the possibility of an artistic arrangement of materials.

Now all art consists in the rearrangement of life experiences. It is only occasionally and accidentally that the chronological method can be artistic. Sometimes, to be sure, it is. For example, the chronological method perfectly suited Amy Lowell in her 'John Keats,' and it is at least doubtful whether any other would here have proved half so effective. As one critic observed, Miss Lowell followed Keats from day to day and from hour to hour, almost

like the ticking of a clock, and in this way she gave her readers an extraordinary sense that they were living themselves into his life. But fortunately for Miss Lowell, Keats had a very short life. Even so her biography of him runs to thirteen hundred pages. What must its length have been if Keats had lived seventy-six years instead of twenty-six! The consideration involves its own commentary with regard to the general usefulness of the chronological method.

It may be helpful to remember that there was a time when the novel was tied to chronology. Richardson and Fielding both began by calling their expansive narratives 'histories,' and until very recently the biographical novel has been the favorite form both in England and in America. Suppose the novel had never shaken itself free of the burden of chronology! Psychography, it seems to me, is now engaged in liberating biography as the novel has long since been liberated.

The objection may arise that I have created a false analogy, that the business of biography is precisely to tell the story of a man's life, and that when it fails to do so it loses its *raison d'être.* But is it the business of biography to tell the story of a man's life? Is anybody interested in the story of a man's life as such? Frederic Harrison long ago declared that the real purpose of biography is 'to make a living portrait of a man's inner nature.' Is not the primary business of the biographer the creation of character, and when he fails in this, does he not fail in the highest aspect of his calling, and that precisely as the novelist does, no matter how successfully he may tell a story?

This at least is the assumption upon which psychography proceeds: it concerns itself wholly with the inner life — with essential attitudes, with secret motives, in short, with the

mystery of personality. Whether the subject wrecked a social order as did Voltaire, or whether he merely translated a few poems as did Edward Fitzgerald, makes essentially no difference. What the psychographer is primarily interested in, is how he felt while he was doing it. It is this complete absorption in the inner life which justifies the psychographer's disregard of chronology and which marks him off as distinctly different from the more orthodox practitioners of the biographical art. Such apostles of orthodoxy are, for example, Mr. Bradford's two most widely discussed contemporaries, the Englishman Lytton Strachey and the Frenchman André Maurois. The latter, who seems to me to have mingled two genres — fiction and biography — in a most entertaining but quite unjustifiable way — [1] has even recently, in an article in the 'Yale Review,' [2] reaffirmed the traditional position — that chronology is indispensable to biography. As for Mr. Strachey, Mr. H. L. Mencken and others have declared *ad nauseam* that he and Mr. Bradford are writing the same sort of thing, but whoever is willing to accept that point of view may as well immediately give up all hope of understanding either of them. Strachey's work differs from the old-fashioned biography immensely in spirit and skill and point of view: it does not differ in method. He builds consistently along the established lines. On the other hand, any estimate of Bradford which is not based on a thorough understanding of his very different means of approach is simply no estimate at all.

Now if the object of the psychographer is to explain a personality, where shall he find his material? Obviously, unless we are to write psychographs of our friends, the material cannot be drawn from first-hand information. And

there are at least three very good reasons why we cannot write about our friends. We are not sufficiently detached from them to estimate them fairly. Except in wholly unusual cases, the world would not buy the books we might write about them. And, most important of all, our friends themselves would never speak to us again! In general it may be said that the material necessary for successful psychography exists only in the case of famous persons who have been some time dead. This is in some respects unfortunate. As Mr. Bradford himself has remarked: 'The psychography of queens and artists and authors and saints is little, if any, more interesting, than that of your mother or mine, or of the first shopgirl we meet. I would paint the shopgirl's portrait with the greatest pleasure, but the material is lacking.' [3]

In analyzing the dead, we must, of course, rely almost entirely on words, the writing of the subject himself and of others about him. And nobody is more conscious than Mr. Bradford that when we build on words we are building a house on the sands. Human language always lags far behind human experience, and not even the masters of words can express to others exactly what they mean. You have the man's own words before you — what more can you ask? But are you sure you can correctly interpret the meaning of those words? Now it is here that it is a great advantage, from one point of view at least, to deal with an author like Dickens. For I have hundreds and thousands of his words before me, printed just as they came from his pen, and therefore surely a much firmer, much broader basis for my structure than I could possibly have if I were dealing with a captain of industry like James J. Hill or a musician like

Massenet or anybody else whose habitual and characteristic expression of himself was through another medium. Moreover, Dickens was trained in the use of words, much better able to express his meaning through them than any man who is not a professional writer. But alas! this advantage works both ways, for a man who has the gift of language is skilled in his ability to conceal, as well as to unveil his soul. And, theoretically at least, this possibility must be fairly considered.

In many cases, however, even with Dickens, I do not have his own words as they came from his own pen. If I were to restrict myself for material to what Dickens himself wrote, my task would be much easier than it has been, but I am afraid there would be even more blank spaces in my portrait than there are now. For no man sees all there is of himself, and I must take into consideration also what Dickens's friends — and his enemies — thought about him. Sometimes these people attempt to record his words, probably never with entire accuracy. Sometimes they merely record their own reactions to him. And as soon as I attempt to use such material, I must immediately begin to study their souls as well as his. 'The biographer,' says Mr. Bradford, 'must have the keenest critical judgment in the use of his materials. For instance, his work must necessarily depend in large part upon the report and record of others as to the character he is studying. He must be able to analyze this record, to allow for the possibilities of error, to estimate the varying credibility of the witnesses he is dealing with, to throw out some with remorseless disregard, to use others with the greatest discretion and reserve, to recognize that there are still others upon whom he can rely with confidence

and who may even form largely the basis of his narrative. A nice discrimination of this sort in the use of testimony is as rare as it is absolutely essential for biographical purposes.' [4]

It is always the least conscious, the most informal writing that yields most to the psychographer. An author's work — the books he wrote for the market — are less likely to reveal his personality directly than the letters he wrote to his friends. For in his books he is on dress parade; he has an artistic purpose; he is writing with the definite object of having the world read him. Consequently, it is only accidentally, as it were, that he 'gives himself away,' for the most guileless man will not reveal his soul to the world as he will reveal it to the friend of his heart. But of course it is always unconscious self-revelation which is of greatest value to the psychographer anyway, and it is just this sort of thing for which he continually keeps his eyes open.

Perhaps the simplest illustration may be the best. For in an unconscious, amateurish kind of way, we are all psychographers, and it is only through collecting data on our fellows that we are able to understand them at all. Mr. Bradford gives three interesting examples from his own experience: 'A man's wife was caught, unexpectedly, in traveling, with little or no money, and obliged to explain her difficulties to the hotel keeper and telegraph to her husband for assistance. The husband sent it at once, but his comment was, "To think that *my* wife should be stranded in a hotel without money." Just reflect upon all that little sentence tells of the person who wrote it! Again, I was explaining to a friend, a terrible disaster that had happened to another friend and I was myself so agitated and overcome that I could not make anything approaching a lucid story. My

hearer was dumbfounded by my condition, and after a moment's effort to gather what I was driving at, his first word was, "Tell me, at least, does this trouble concern me?" Think of the depths of human nature revealed in that! Take still another instance. A most worthy, affectionate, devoted husband, who was trying to do all that could be done for an invalid wife, used often to remark, "When I stand by her grave, I do not wish to have anything to reproach myself with." Simple, natural words, perhaps, yet they seem to me distinctly significant of a certain type of man.' [5]

To this I would add three examples of my own. My mind goes back to an acquaintance of mine who, when the question came up in the family circle whether the money available for the spring house-cleaning should be used to paint the outside of the house or to paper the rooms within, settled the problem without a moment's hesitation by saying, 'Oh, by all means, put it on the outside, where it will show!' Again I recall a friend in other days, the father of a numerous progeny, who once told me with tears in his eyes that he used to lie awake nights worrying over the possibility that if he should die, his wife might marry another man. And, lest it be assumed hastily that all unconsciously self-revealing remarks show the subject at his worst, let me add this final instance. Once I was walking along the street with a young actress when a little urchin suddenly screamed some vulgarity at us. An angry retort sprang at once to my lips, but before I had time even to utter it, the girl forestalled me, remarking with a world of tender sympathy — 'O, my poor child!' Just that — no other reaction. Then, as if that were not enough, she apologized to me for having assumed a grandmotherly tone toward the young scoundrel.

Poking among written records also, one may have such experiences. 'All at once,' as Sainte-Beuve puts it, 'the surface of life is torn apart, and we read bare soul.' [6] Mr. Bradford has often called attention to such sayings. There is that very self-revealing sentence of Voltaire's: 'I have never been able to understand how anybody could be cold: that is too much for me.' [7] And again, those terrible words of General Lee's: 'It is well that war is so terrible, or else we might grow too fond of it.' [8] In studying Dickens, I have had occasion to note such things again and again. Take, for example, these sentences from a public address delivered in 1869. Dickens is speaking of the qualities necessary for success in literature: 'To this I would superadd a little truth, which holds equally good of my own life and the life of every eminent man I have ever known. The one serviceable, safe, certain, remunerative, attainable quality in every study and in every pursuit is the quality of attention. My own invention or imagination, such as it is, would never have served me as it has, but for the habit of commonplace, humble, patient, daily, toiling, drudging attention. Genius, vivacity, quickness of penetration, brilliancy in association of ideas — such mental qualities, like the qualities of the apparition of the externally armed head in "Macbeth," will not be commanded; but attention, after due term of submissive service, always will.' [9]

Does any man need any more conclusive testimony than that to prove that Charles Dickens considered himself a great writer? And note how he is virtually tricked into revealing what he thinks of himself by the very fact that he is *consciously* emphasizing his commonplace qualities. Industry is what he is talking about, patience what he is openly

laying claim to. But it is his 'genius, vivacity, quickness of penetration, brilliancy in association of ideas' upon which the mind of the listener is unavoidably focussed.

In general, it may be said that the more extensive the material, the less danger of misinterpretation there will be. A man may write one book and conceal his personality, perhaps, but he would have to be something of a diabolical kind of superman to conceal his personality through the writing of fifty books. Of course, there is still the possibility of simply misinterpreting either the subject's own words or the words of others about him, but although there is difficulty in balancing the testimony of fifty witnesses, one against the other, still I would rather have fifty witnesses upon which to base my estimate of a man's character than five. In Dickens's case, although it is perfectly evident that he irritated some people as much as he charmed others, I do not consider that I have met with insurmountable problems on any really vital point. To be sure, we have J. F. Snyder, who as a boy saw Dickens in Belleville, Illinois, on the first American tour, and who, when he came to write down his memories, *more than sixty years afterward*, spoke of Dickens's ungracious behavior, his careless dress, his common appearance, his enormous appetite, and his general air of cynicism and snobbishness. This record was made so long after the event that it would be worth very little under any circumstances. When, in addition to this, Dr. Snyder's testimony conflicts so very directly with what the vast majority of those who came into contact with Dickens have recorded, I feel little compunction in dismissing it as hardly worthy of consideration. Yet that is not to say that there is *no truth whatever* in Snyder's record. The circumstances under which

he saw Dickens were quite exceptional: the novelist was tired; he was in the midst of a weary journey; he was accumulating unfavorable opinions of the West with dismaying rapidity. Perhaps he was not quite so gracious in Belleville as he was in London. And in the case of Eleanor Christian, to whom I have frequently referred, we find a witness who, while she was evidently not unprejudiced and must therefore be used with caution, certainly cannot be summarily dismissed.

But it is not only true that it is words through which the material for psychography comes to us, and of which that material consists, but words constitute the medium in which we need to present our findings. The success of psychography may, indeed, be estimated in the degree to which the writer makes it possible for the reader to check up on his conclusions. In other words, he should present as much of his evidence as he possibly can. In the case of Dickens I have tried always to be guided by an incidental remark in one of Mr. Bradford's prefaces: 'As with all my portraits, I have endeavoured to let the subject speak for himself, simply adding such comment of my own or of others as may make the utterance more effective.' [10]

To be successful, then, psychography must be highly documented, and documentation, in nine cases out of ten, must take the form of quotation. Here again is illustrated the advantage of working with an author or with one whose utterances are likely to prove interesting reading for their own sake. In general in the Bradford psychograph, quotations are short, woven inextricably into the text. Here if anywhere Mr. Bradford shows his advance over Sainte-Beuve, who is quite likely to quote long letters only a portion

of which he actually needs. In this book you will find some long quotations, but I apologize for every one of them, for the danger of over-documenting is a real one, and it always results immediately in lowering the interest of the reader.

Yet the great problem in psychography, as in any art, is the problem of structure. When I finished my reading for Dickens, I had well over two thousand notes. My problem then became that of placing each one of these notes in the exact position in which it would be most effective. I knew there was one and only one exactly right place for each one of those notes. I wish I could be sure that I had found it in each case.

Mr. Bradford, especially in his shorter papers, often adopts a very interesting technical device, that of striking a key-note at the outset and recurring to it thereafter. Like a motif in a Wagner opera, this note reverberates throughout the psychograph, thus aiding notably in holding the diverse material together. The portraits collected in the volume called 'Bare Souls' illustrate all this admirably. Thus Voltaire is preëminently a creature of superb spiritual vitality, Walpole primarily a dilettante. As for Flaubert: 'The whole serious purpose of his existence was to interpret life in beautiful words.' In the case of Keats, the accent is on the man's entire normality. 'Though Keats burned out his life at twenty-five, consumed by the passion for creating great poetry, he was no visionary, no crack-brained dreamer, but a sane, sound, normal human being, as Shakespeare was.' Gray's life was set in solitude: he 'supported himself with decency and dignity, lived long in his remote, sequestered corner, and melted out of the world, apparently, as a man, a perfect bit of alms for the vast erasure of oblivion.'

Charles Lamb was 'a creature of whim and frolic fancy, turned life upside down and inside out, sported with it, trifled with it, tossed it in the air like soap bubbles or thistledown, regardless of where it fell or whom it might light upon.' With Fitzgerald the keynote of idleness is somewhat less satisfactory, for idleness is a negative rather than a positive thing. But the Cowper portrait — one of the best in the book, perhaps because its subject is so delightfully abnormal! — may be called masterly as to structure. The basis for the study of Cowper is hell, for the man lived his life under the shadow of the absolute conviction that hell would be his eternal home. That fact the reader must never be allowed to forget, for Cowper never did. Once when he was crossing a cemetery at night, a grave-digger threw up a skull and struck him. 'The incident impressed him deeply, and skulls were hitting him from somewhere all his life.' Yet hell must not be overemphasized in connection with Cowper or the result will be a caricature and not a portrait. It permeated a life filled otherwise with self-confidence, personal charm, love of nature and of animals, charity, interest in people, in art, and in music; and every one of these elements must somehow find its place. You think of him with Mrs. Unwin 'in that cozy, drowsy atmosphere of English fireside routine. Women petted him, cats purred about him, he held endless skeins of worsted, cracked his little pleasant jokes, drank oceans of tea. And all the time within an inch of his unsteady foot opened that black, unfathomable gulf of hell.'

If structure in psychography were a static thing, if, for example, there were a skeleton outline to which all portraits were made to conform, it would very soon become an in-

tolerably formalized type of writing. But in Mr. Bradford's work it is nothing of the sort. His method is long since established, yet it is constantly varying, and in each case the ideal is to allow the material itself to determine the structure; that is, to cast itself into the most effective possible form.

There is an obvious difference between the full-length studies — Lee, Pepys, Darwin, and Moody — and the twenty-page portraits. In the latter, intense concentration is the order of the day, for the twenty-page sketch requires fully as much research as the full-length book. In the one case as in the other, the psychographer must master all the available information before he ever puts pen to paper. The full-length psychograph gives much greater opportunity for detail, for criticism and comparison, weaving back and forth, above all, perhaps, for a fuller consideration of the implications of the subject than the more condensed form allows. Thus the book on D. L. Moody involves the whole background of popular Evangelical religion in America in the nineteenth century: indeed, the whole difference between the Fundamentalist and the Modernist approach to life is summed up in it. But the four full-length studies are not by any means identical in structure, as the reader may see for himself by simply running over the chapter-headings of 'Lee the American,' 'The Soul of Samuel Pepys,' 'Darwin,' and 'D. L. Moody, A Worker in Souls.'

In truth there never were two human souls that could be approached in exactly the same way. Compare, for example, 'Portraits of American Women' and 'Wives.' The first book treats of women distinguished in their own right, the latter, of women who would never have been heard of

save for the fortuity of marriage with either famous or infamous men. In this second instance it is generally necessary to reconstruct the woman's soul from what has been written of her husband. Obviously, the same technique cannot be applied in exactly the same way in both books. Again, compare 'Wives' with either 'Bare Souls' or 'The Soul of Samuel Pepys.' These last two books presented the challenge of superb material: the greatest diary and some of the greatest letters that the world knows. The danger here was the danger of being overwhelmed by too much riches; the question was whether the psychographic method was able to present this magnificent material effectively. In 'Wives,' on the other hand, the problem was analogous to making bricks without straw. This was especially evident in the case of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln, of whom Mr. Bradford remarked slyly, 'I cannot ask my readers to give implicit belief to anything I say about Mrs. Lincoln, for I believe very little of it myself.' But it is this very 'delightful inconclusiveness' which is the seal of his trustworthy honesty as a biographer: he has not been tempted unwarrantably to fill in the picture. Structurally, the paper on Mrs. James G. Blaine in the same volume is most interesting: the author surrounds her with ever-narrowing circles, considering in order her relation to society, to her family, to her husband, and to her own soul.

There are those, of course, who look askance not only at psychography, but at the whole psychological trend of modern biographical writing, and who assure us that it has accomplished nothing save that it has made gossip respectable. And there is no denying that some of the books of the new school do deserve to be thus summarily

dismissed. The iconoclastic mood of our day, the cynicism and disillusion of the after-the-War period — it was inevitable that these things should express themselves in biography as well as in other phases of our literary expression. But it is surely a mistake to regard the new methods as primarily or largely destructive. The modern biographer has removed some haloes, to be sure, but he has conferred others, as when Frederick Chamberlin vindicated 'The Private Character of Queen Elizabeth,' or when Waldo R. Browne resuscitated the gallant figure of 'Altgeld of Illinois.' All in all, there is no branch of knowledge more valuable than the knowledge of human nature, and there is nothing more likely to enrich that knowledge than the study of those human beings who, being renowned for some quality or other which has made them a legitimate object of human interest, had in them much which belongs to all humanity.

Certainly Mr. Bradford's own attitude has been consistently sympathetic. His long series of psychographs has abundantly proved, if proof were needed, that ruthless dissection of character is quite compatible with love of the human species. I do not know how better to illustrate this than by repeating his own illuminating account of the origin of his most popular book, 'Damaged Souls':

'When it was proposed that I should write a series of biographical studies for "Harper's Magazine," the editor first suggested "iconoclastic portraits": "Our idea would be to go back through our national history and select prominent figures who have loomed over-large in their own day and have shone with a false glory — lucky creatures of chance or circumstance who appealed tremendously to the popular imagination of their time. . . . Of course, in dealing with such

a gallery we should expect you to proceed ruthlessly and with scant deference to tradition." To this proposal I replied that it made "a fascinating appeal to the worst elements of my nature," and that "nothing would amuse me more than to take empty simulacra down from pedestals where they have enjoyed the secure adoration of ages." At the same time I objected that such a work of destruction was not really worth doing, and that in the end it was likely to do more injury to the critic than to the character criticized. I urged that I did not want "to undermine, to overthrow, to destroy, even the things that deserve it," and I pointed out that "in every character I have portrayed so far it has been my endeavor to find the good rather than the evil, to set the figure firmly on its common human basis, but at the same time to insist that if the human heart were not worth loving, my work would not be worth doing." After reflecting on the matter, I made the counter-proposition, to do "a group of somewhat discredited figures, and not endeavor in any way to rehabilitate or whitewash, but to bring out their real humanity and show that, after all, they have something of the same strength and weakness as all of us." And I suggested that the series might pass under the title of "Damaged" or "Patched Souls."' [11]

This, then, is the psychographic method as I understand it, and as I have tried to apply it in this book. The significance of the method seems to me very great and that entirely apart from my own failure or success in using it. Mr. Bradford's final claim to distinction is, indeed, that he has made the writing of men's lives a job for artists at last. For though psychography is a form of its own, the psychographic methods have already affected the more orthodox biogra-

phers in many ways and doubtless will continue to do so in time to come. It is extremely doubtful whether we shall ever again accept the old, clumsy, ponderous, helter-skelter, repetitious, unselected, unorganized masses that once went under the name of biography.

At the same time, I must make it perfectly clear that I regard psychography as a working method and do not for a moment imagine that any flawless results can be obtained through it. There is never any last word on any subject: there is only a latest word. So long as humanity remains human, there can never be any final interpretation of any personality, or for that matter of the expression of any personality in a work of art. But the uncertainty of psychography is precisely its lure: it is this that tells us that we are dealing with material that is alive.

There is, however, one question more which seems to me to enter into the reckoning at this point and which I must not leave unnoted. Granting the usefulness of the psychographic method in biography, one may — in a case like the present, where the subject is a famous man of letters — ask further: Does psychography have any significance at all for the study of literature?

It seems to me that it has a good deal. At present, students of literature may be said to be divided into two camps: one interested primarily in background and content, the other primarily in style and technique. The two points of view illustrate themselves conveniently by reference to two recent books: Professor Vernon Louis Parrington's 'Main Currents in American Thought' (Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927) and Professor Edith Rickert's 'New Methods for the Study of Literature' (University of Chicago

Press, 1927). Although no scholar is more cognizant than Miss Rickert of the importance of the study of the environment of literature, she insists that such work is not the study of literature itself. 'We have, then, a curious situation. While the study of the environment of literature is conducted on the most modern scientific principles, the study of literature itself, as distinct from its environment, has not developed.' By way of remedy, she proposes a minute analysis of the qualities of style.

But there is yet a third method of studying literature, and that is the method illustrated in this book. This is nothing more nor less than an approach to literature through the personality of the writer. I realize that this may seem to be working in a curiously roundabout fashion. The psychographer as psychographer is interested only in the writer's soul. A chance remark to a friend, thrown off casually and without style, is grist to the psychography mill quite as much as any delicate bit of literary analysis can possibly be. Yet it is quite impossible to leave the matter there. For inevitably, when we have completed our study of the man's self, we shall have a better understanding of the literary work which, in its last analysis, is the expression of that self.

In other words, as Middleton Murry has said, 'To know a work of literature is to know the soul of the man who created it, and who created it in order that his soul should be known.' [12] I am aware that this is not quite orthodox, but it may be none the worse on that account. Many contemporary critics conceive of art as existing in a vacuum and would exclude the personality of the artist — his life, his morals, his aspirations, his ideals — from the consideration altogether. But so long as personality remains the highest

form of expression that life on this planet has attained, so long as most of us find it impossible to conceive of the Divine Being Himself except in terms of Personality, so long — it would seem — literature must be significant primarily as it expresses personality, and so long the quality of the soul behind it will be of considerable importance. While, then, the critical study of Dickens's novels does not at all enter my province, it may be hoped that this personal study will yet have some bearing on the problem of literary interpretation.

In preparing this study, I have drawn freely on the resources of so many libraries, located all the way from Boston to the Pacific Coast, and have received courtesies from so many librarians that it would be tedious were I to attempt to record all my obligations here. I cannot, however, omit the name of Mr. Alfred C. Potter, of Harvard, who placed the collection of Letters from Charles Dickens to Charles Lever, in the Widener Collection, and other manuscript material in the Harvard University Library at my disposal, and gave me permission to use all as freely as might be necessary.

Thanks are due also to Professor D. D. Griffith, of the University of Washington, without whose interest and encouragement I should hardly have devoted myself to developing and carrying out this idea as I first conceived it, and to my father, Mr. Henry E. Wagenknecht, who has contributed very patient and painstaking assistance in the preparation of the manuscript and in proof-reading.

I am aware, of course, that many interpretations advanced in the foregoing pages are open to question. In deal-

ing with such subjective material as I have handled here, it would be quite vain to hope for unanimity of impression. While I have used all the data that were available to me, I know there are more in existence, and I shall be particularly grateful to correspondents who possess, or who may know of the existence of material, not listed in my bibliography, which may in any way modify the interpretations that I have made.

EDWARD WAGENKNECHT

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NOTES ON THE BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. This bibliography does not pretend to be a complete list of all the books and articles which throw light on the personality of Dickens. I have listed only those works which I have read, and for the most part only those from which I have taken notes. This does not mean, however, that *every* book listed in the bibliography will be found also among the references, for in some cases I have listed books on which I did not draw directly, thinking that other students of Dickens might like to have them named.

2. There are so many different editions of Dickens's works in general use that page references to any one edition must, when taken by themselves, be almost useless. I have, therefore, adopted the following plan. I give, first, page references to the edition I used, the Tavistock, as: *Works*, XXII, 424. This is followed by the name of the novel concerned, as: *Great Expectations*, chap. 44, or — in the case of the shorter pieces: *Christmas Stories*, 'Nobody's Story.'

3. The same remarks apply, in a measure, to Forster. Hence Forster references appear as follows: Forster I, 81 (Book II, chap. 1). The volume and page references are to the Memorial Edition. It will be noted also that two editions of Forster are listed in my bibliography and in my notes: this aforesaid Memorial Edition and the new annotated edition, edited by Mr. Ley, and published in 1928. I use the latter only for its valuable annotations. My reading in Forster was completed and the notes taken before Mr. Ley's book appeared.

4. It will be observed that in each case I give the name of the publisher of the book. This is against the rules as laid down by certain bibliographers, but I have wasted so much time looking for books of which others have failed to note the publishers that I have no desire to inflict similar burdens on anybody else. The imprint in each case is that of the edition I actually used. I have made no attempt to go back to first editions. Some books are used for illustrative purposes rather than as sources. These are not listed in the bibliography but only in the notes.

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143. Cf. his description of the streets of Boston in terms of a set on the stage — *Works*, XXVIII, 29 (*American Notes*, ch. 3). Also cf. *Letters*, p. 152 (to Macready, 1846); Forster, I, 339 (Book IV, ch. 4).
144. *Works*, VI, 46 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 3); XXXV, 187 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'The Amusements of the People'); XXXVI, 98 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Why?'); Shore, p. 285.
145. *Works*, XXXVI, 14 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Gaslight Fairies').
146. *Works*, XXV, 323 (*Hard Times*, ch. 8).
147. *Works*, XXXV, 186 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'The Amusements of the People').

148. Forster, I, 394 (Book V, ch. 1).
149. Fields, p. 136.
150. *Dickensian*, XI, 134.
151. Forster, II, 445 (Book XI, ch. 3).
152. Fitzgerald, *Life*, I, 229. Cf. Fields, p. 200.
153. Dexter, *Lemon Letters*, p. 6.
154. Dexter, *Charles Dickens*, p. 55.
155. Van Amerongen, pp. 254–55.
156. Ward, p. 191.
157. Forster, II, 417 (Book XI, ch. 3).
158. Forster, I, 8 (Book I, ch. 1).
159. Forster, I, 8–9 (Book I, ch. 1).
160. Cf. *Works*, XXIX, 174–75 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 15).
161. Forster, I, 12 (Book I, ch. 1).
162. Forster, I, 17 (Book I, ch. 1).
163. Forster, I, 44 (Book I, ch. 3).
164. George Gissing, *Charles Dickens*, pp. 25–29.
165. Fields, pp. 238–39.
166. *New Liberal Review*, II, 397.
167. *Letters*, p. 59 (to Irving, 1842).
168. *Harper's Magazine*, CXXIX, 189.
169. MacKenzie, p. 242.
170. Cf. the essay, 'The Restoration of Shakespeare's Lear to the Stage,' in *Miscellaneous Papers*.
171. Forster, I, 323 (Book IV, ch. 3).
172. Forster, II, 17 (Book VI, ch. 1).
173. Many interesting errata are pointed out in ch. 20 of Fitzgerald's valuable *Life of Charles Dickens as Revealed in his Writings*.
174. Shore, pp. 367–68.
175. *Letters*, p. 168 (to E. Tagart, 1847).
176. Forster, I, 439 (Book V, ch. 5).
177. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil*, p. 191.
178. *Letters*, p. 605 (to E. Tennant, 1866).
179. Forster, I, 331 (Book IV, ch. 4).
180. *Letters*, p. 484 (to Forster, 1859); Forster, II, 316 (Book IX, ch. 2).
181. Forster, I, 288–89 (Book IV, ch. 1).

182. *Letters*, p. 444 (to Collins, 1858).
183. Straus, p. 234.
184. Forster, II, 65 (Book VI, ch. 3).

CHAPTER IV: DICKENS AND HUMANITY

1. *Speeches*, pp. 279–80.
2. Forster, I, 347 (Book IV, ch. 4).
3. Renton, p. 98.
4. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil*, p. 80.
5. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil, Supplement*, p. 49.
6. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil*, p. 99.
7. Forster, II, 434–35 (Book XI, ch. 3).
8. Howe, pp. 188–90.
9. Forster, II, 435 (Book XI, ch. 3).
10. *Beadnell Letters*, pp. 38–39.
11. All these quotations from Forster, Book I, ch. 2.
12. Forster, I, 182 (Book III, ch. 1).
13. *New York Tribune*, Oct. 7, 1883.
14. *Letters*, p. 95 (to C. Felton, 1843).
15. Forster, II, 376 (Book X, ch. 2).
16. Sala, *Charles Dickens*, pp. 64–65.
17. Frith, II, 217–18.
18. Cf. *Letters*, p. 61 (to Macready, 1842).
19. Dolby, p. 22.
20. *Speeches*, p. 281.
21. *Works*, V, 181 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 44); V, 466 (ch. 62).
22. *Works*, II, 474 (*Pickwick Papers*, ch. 57).
23. *Speeches*, Int., p. xliii.
24. Kent, p. 267.
25. *Works*, XXXII, 149 (*Christmas Stories*, 'Mugby Junction,' 1).
26. Forster, II, 224 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
27. *Letters*, p. 645 (to C. Dickens, Jr., 1867).
28. Forster, I, 136–37 (Book II, ch. 8).
29. *Works*, XXXII, 430 (*Christmas Stories*, 'The Lazy Tour,' ch. 4).
30. *Works*, XXII, 185 (*Great Expectations*, ch. 19).
31. *Letters*, p. 267.

32. Conway, *Autobiography*, II, 140–42.
33. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil, Supplement*, p. 16.
34. *Wills Letters*, p. 168 (1855).
35. *My Father As I Recall Him*, p. 9.
36. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 84.
37. Fitzgerald, *Memories*, p. 44.
38. *Speeches*, p. 277.
39. *Works*, XII, 259 (*Barnaby Rudge*, ch. 24).
40. Forster, I, 325 (Book IV, ch. 3).
41. *Works*, XX, 236 (*Little Dorrit*, Book II, ch. 16).
42. *Works*, XVI, 9 (*Bleak House*, ch. 1).
43. Forster, II, 214 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
44. *Works*, IV, 162 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 12).
45. *Works*, IV, 258 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 17).
46. *Letters*, p. 613 (to M. de Cerjat, 1867).
47. Frith, II, 156.
48. *Dickensian*, VIII, 217.
49. *Speeches*, p. 77.
50. *Speeches*, p. 83.
51. *Works*, XXXVI, 84 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Insularities').
52. *Works*, XXXI, 269 (*Christmas Stories*, 'The Haunted House,' 1).
53. *Speeches*, p. 128.
54. *Works*, XVI, 133 (*Bleak House*, ch. 8).
55. *Works*, XXVIII, 251 (*American Notes*, ch. 15).
56. Forster, I, 429 (Book V, ch. 4).
57. *Works*, XVIII, 120–22 (*The Chimes*, 1).
58. *Letters*, p. 329.
59. *Works*, XXV, 107 (*Hard Times*, Book I, ch. 15).
60. *Works*, XXXV, 454 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'On Strike').
61. *Works*, VII, 353 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 46).
62. Duffy, p. 75.
63. *Dickensian*, VIII, 216.
64. *Works*, XXII, 147 (*Great Expectations*, ch. 17).
65. *Works*, VIII, 451 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 26).
66. *Works*, XXV, 152 (*Hard Times*, Book II, ch. 3).
67. *Works*, XXXVI, 110 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'The Demeanour of

Murderers'). Cf. XXVII, 239 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'The Poetic Young Gentleman').

68. *Works*, XXIV, 157 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book III, ch. 11).
69. *Letters*, p. 286 (to Wills, 1853).
70. *Works*, XIX, 155 (*Little Dorrit*, Book I, ch. 11).
71. *Works*, XXI, 431 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III, ch. 15)
72. *Works*, XVIII, 73 (*A Christmas Carol*, III).
73. *Wills Letters*, p. 334.
74. *Wills Letters*, p. 337.
75. *Wills Letters*, p. 352.
76. *Works*, XIX, 252 (*Little Dorrit*, Book I, ch. 17).
77. *What I Remember*, p. 355.
78. *Kolle Letters*, p 74.
79. *Kolle Letters*, p. 89.
80. *Works*, XXXIII, 117 (*Edwin Drood*, ch. 10).

CHAPTER V: FIVE TESTS OF CHARACTER

1. *New Liberal Review*, II, 396.
2. *The Actor in Dickens*, p. 273.
3. Forster, I, 207–08 (Book III, ch. 3).
4. *New York Tribune*, 7 Oct. 1883.
5. Forster, I, 313 (Book IV, ch. 2).
6. Int. to *Christmas Books*, Macmillan ed., p. xiv.
7. Forster, II, 16 (Book VI, ch. 1).
8. Forster, II, 106 (Book VI, ch. 6).
9. *Speeches*, p. 66.
10. *Works*, XXIII, 124 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book I, ch. 9).
11. *Works*, XXIII, 338 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book II, ch. 5).
12. *Works*, V, 495 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 65).
13. *Nineteenth Century*, LXXXVIII, 642.
14. *Proceedings Massachusetts Historical Society*, LIV, 151–52.
15. Jackson, pp. 41–46.
16. *Works*, XXVIII, 296 (*American Notes*, ch. 18).
17. *Works*, I, 105 (*Pickwick Papers*, ch. 7).
18. Stoddard, p. 245.
19. Scott and O'Shaughnessy, p. 28.

20. *My Lifetime*, I, 97.
21. *Things and People*, I, 120.
22. Perkins, p. 158.
23. Henry F. Chorley, in Perkins, p. 166.
24. *Forty Years in My Bookshop*, p. 138.
25. Fitzgerald, *Memories*, p. 178.
26. Hotten, p. 106.
27. Perkins, p. 146.
28. Payne, p. 204.
29. Sala, *Dickens*, p. 53.
30. Kitton, *Dickensiana*, p. 21.
31. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 117.
32. *Speeches*, p. 187.
33. *Works*, IV, 30 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 3).
34. *Works*, XXVII, 267 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'The Formal Couple').
35. *London Tribune*, 3 Feb. 1906.
36. *Works*, V, 283–84 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 50).
37. *Overland Monthly*, VI, 81.
38. *Yesterdays with Authors*, p. 203.
39. *An Old Man's Diary*, Part IV, p. 15.
40. *Letters*, p. 18.
41. *A Child's Journey with Dickens*, p. 22.
42. Forster, II, 223–24 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
43. *Cosmopolitan*, LII, 150.
44. Pemberton, p. 156.
45. Marryat, II, 118–19.
46. *North American Review*, CLX, 527.
47. *Letters*, p. 497 (to M. de Cerjat, 1860).
48. Letter to Lever, 12 Jan. 1861, MS., Widener Collection.
49. Yates, *Fifty Years of London Life*, p. 285.
50. *Anderson Catalogue*, Nov. 25, 1927.
51. *New York Tribune*, 7 Oct. 1883.
52. Straus, p. 299.
53. *Living Age*, CLXIV, 343; *My Father As I Recall Him*, pp. 13–14.
54. *Character Sketches*, p. 9.
55. *Living Age*, CLXIV, 347. Cf. H. F. Dickens, *Memories of My Father*, pp. 22–23.

56. *Living Age*, CLXIV, 345.
57. *Cosmopolitan*, LII, 159.
58. Mamie Dickens, *Charles Dickens*, p. 68.
59. *Living Age*, CLXIV, 344.
60. Marzials, p. 83.
61. *Works*, XII, 77 (*Barnaby Rudge*, ch. 7).
62. Hughes, pp. 371–72.
63. *Living Age*, CCCXIX, 139.
64. *Strand Magazine*, XLV, 467.
65. *Yesterdays with Authors*, p. 237.
66. See Peggy Webling, 'Dickens on Animals,' *Dickensian*, XI (1915), 292–95; Rebecca J. Gradwohl, 'The Dogs of Dickens's Books,' *Catholic World*, CXXVI (1926), 466–70. For his recipe for feeding dogs, cf. Lehmann, *Memories of Half a Century*, p. 102. Like all who view animals sympathetically, Dickens is sometimes accused of nature-faking: cf. Henry Leffman, 'Charles Dickens as a Nature-Faker,' *Dickensian*, V (1909), 213–16.
67. Forster, II, 172–73 (Book VII, ch. 4). Cf. Roland Corthell, 'Did Dickens Love Cats?' *Dickensian*, XXI (1925), 23–25.
68. *Works*, XXVIII, 199 (*American Notes*, ch. 12).
69. *Letters*, p. 421 (to M. de Cerjat, 1857).
70. *Collins Letters*, pp. 101–02.
71. *Works*, VI, 378 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 19).
72. To be sure, Mary Ann Mitton, said to be the original of *Little Dorrit*, recollected in 1910, as recorded in Edwin Pugh's *Dickens Originals*, p. 164, that Dickens used to come out to Suddaby week-ends during his reporting days, and enumerated bird-nesting, egg-stealing, rabbit-hunting, bird catching, and fishing as among the recreations they shared together. I find this a bit difficult to swallow. Certainly there is no indication of any interest in such crimes as these in any authenticated evidence on Dickens's life. The most charitable supposition is that the old lady, as Mark Twain would put it, recollected in her age only the things that didn't happen.
73. Kitton, *Illustrators*, p. 208.
74. *Speeches, Letters, and Sayings*, p. 114.
75. Clark, *Charles Dickens and the Yorkshire Schools*, p. 8.

76. To Charles Lever, 2 Jan. 1860, MS., Widener Collection.
77. *Letters*, p. 58.
78. *Dickensian*, VI, 213.
79. *Letters*, p. 59.
80. To Charles Lever, 13 Jan. 1860, MS., Widener Collection.
81. *Harper's Magazine*, XLI, 611.
82. Winter, *Old Friends*, p. 206.
83. Ley, *Dickens Circle*, p. 341.
84. Ley, *Dickens Circle*, p. 31.
85. Macready, *Diaries*, I, 482 (13 Dec. 1838).
86. Clark, *Charles Dickens and Clarkson Stanfield*, p. 28.
87. *Pictures of Travel*, pp. 289–90.
88. See A. T. Dickens's American circular, published by the J. B. Pond Lyceum Bureau, in Harvard University Library.
89. *New York Tribune*, 7 Oct. 1883 (letter written in 1832 or 1833).
90. *Character Sketches*, p. 10.
91. Straus, pp. 107–08.
92. Carlton, p. 26.
93. *Nineteenth Century*, LXXXVIII, 641.
94. Cf. *Ley's Annotated Forster*, p. 17.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
96. *Coggeshall Catalogue*, No. 2, p. 60.
97. *Childhood and Youth*, p. 18.
98. *Recollections of Writers*, p. 304.

CHAPTER VI: DICKENS AND LOVE

1. *Collins Letters*, pp. 51–52.
2. Forster, II, 383–84 (Book X, ch. 2).
3. *Collins Letters*, pp. 52–53.
4. *Letters*, p. 438 (to G. Hogarth, 1857).
5. *Letters*, p. 681 (to Macready, 1868).
6. *Works*, VI, 348 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 17).
7. *Works*, XVIII, 208 (*Cricket on the Hearth*, I).
8. *Works*, XVIII, 250 (*Cricket on the Hearth*, II).
9. Forster, I, 81 (Book II, ch. 1).
10. *Works*, XXXIV, 45 (*Reprinted Pieces*).

11. *Works*, XXVIII, 258 (*American Notes*, ch. 15).
12. *Works*, VI, 70 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 4).
13. *Works*, III, 276 (*Oliver Twist*, ch. 31).
14. *Works*, I, 268 (*Pickwick Papers*, ch. 16).
15. *Works*, XIX, 386 (*Little Dorrit*, Book I, ch. 26).
16. *Works*, XXVI, 346 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Tales,' ch. 1).
17. *Works*, XXVI, 110 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Scenes,' ch. 9).
18. *Works*, XXII, 219 (*Great Expectations*, ch. 23).
19. *Works*, XXVIII, 77, 79–80 (*American Notes*, ch. 4).
20. *Works*, IV, 248 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 17).
21. *Bleak House*, ch. 2.
22. *Works*, I, 89 (*Pickwick Papers*, ch. 6).
23. *Works*, XXXI, 176 (*Christmas Stories*).
24. *Speeches*, p. 106.
25. *Works*, III, 259–60 (*Oliver Twist*, ch. 29).
26. *Works*, XI, 354 (*Old Curiosity Shop*, p. 69).
27. *Works*, XXI, 109 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book II, ch. 6).
28. *Works*, VIII, 35 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 3).
29. *Works*, XXIII, 244 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book I, ch. 16).
30. *Letters*, p. 543 (to M. de Cerjat, 1862).
31. Pemberton, p. 244.
32. *Letters*, pp. 446–47 (1858).
33. Forster, II, 102 (Book VI, ch. 6); Ley, *Dickens Circle*, p. 165; *Ley's Annotated Forster*, p. 546. See also Forster, II, 339–40 (Book IX, ch. 7); *Works*, XXVI, 227 and 239 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Scenes,' chs. 33 and 35). The kindly treatment of Lilian Fern in *The Chimes* and of Em'ly in *David Copperfield* (Em'ly of course is not a prostitute) also deserves to be mentioned.
34. *Works*, XIII, 318 (*Barnaby Rudge*, ch. 71).
35. *Works*, XV, 245 (*David Copperfield*, ch. 44).
36. *Works*, XV, 315 (*David Copperfield*, ch. 48).
37. *Letters*, p. 501 (to Wills, 1860).
38. *Speeches*, p. 86.
39. *Speeches*, p. 323.
40. *Ladies' Home Journal*, XXIX, Jan. 1912, p. 15.
41. *Works*, XXXV, 353 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Sucking Pigs').
42. *Works*, XXXI, 287 (*Christmas Stories*).

43. *Works*, XVIII, 315 (*The Battle of Life*, I).
44. *Works*, VII, 52 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 28).
45. Mr. J. B. Van Amerongen, one of the most recent and most scholarly of all writers on Dickens, definitely charges the novelist with subordinating women. He feels that the long-suffering woman is Dickens's ideal, and that in sexual matters especially, a woman's self-respect is almost ignored. Cf. *The Actor in Dickens*, pp. 242–44.
46. *Works*, III, 308 (*Oliver Twist*, ch. 34).
47. *Works*, V, 123 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 40).
48. *Works*, V, 171 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 43).
49. *Works*, XXIII, 146 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book I, ch. 10).
50. *Works* XXII, 269–70 (*Great Expectations*, ch. 29).
51. *Works*, XII, 169 (*Barnaby Rudge*, ch. 15).
52. *Works*, XXI, 244 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book II, ch. 21).
53. *Works*, VIII, 300 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 18).
54. *Works*, XXIV, 313 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book IV, ch. 4).
55. Forster, II, 473 (Will of Dickens).
56. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 51.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
60. *Loc. cit.*
61. *Ibid.*, p. 93. Cf. H. F. Dickens, *Memories of My Father*, pp. 19–20.
62. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 93.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
64. The charming Angelica passage in the paper on 'City of London Churches,' in *The Uncommercial Traveller*, also evidently echoes Dickens's memories of Maria Beadnell, and the sentimental passages in the paper on 'Birthday Celebrations' are also generally supposed to refer to her.
65. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 92.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
68. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
69. *Works*, XIX, 182–83 (*Little Dorrit*, Book I, ch. 13).
70. *Letters*, p. 10.

71. *Letters*, p. 92 (to Mrs. Hogarth, 1843). Cf. the extraordinary dream in Genoa, narrated in Forster, I, 354 (Book IV, ch. 5).
72. Forster, I, 263 (Book III, ch. 6).
73. Forster, II, 447 (Book XI, ch. 3).
74. *Loc. cit.*
75. *Childhood and Youth*, p. 204.
76. *Harper's Magazine*, CIV, 706–07.
77. Forster, II, 229–30 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
78. *Atlantic Monthly*, XXVI, 478.
79. *Pictures of Travel*, p. 271.
80. Payne, p. 7.
81. Payne, pp. 130–31.
82. *Diary*, II, 118.
83. MacKenzie, *Life*, p. 146.
84. Stoddard, p. 267.
85. MacKenzie, *Life*, p. 298.
86. Beazell, p. 40.
87. *Bookman* (New York), LIII, 52.
88. *Kolle Letters*, p. 64. Lady Priestley, *The Story of a Lifetime*, prints a friendly, playful letter, written by Dickens to his wife from London, 3 Dec. 1853.
89. Forster, I, 35 (Book I, ch. 2).
90. Forster, I, 258 (Book III, ch. 6).
91. Forster, I, 269 (Book III, ch. 7).
92. Adair Fitzgerald, facsimile facing p. 12.
93. Frith, II, 277.
94. *Wills Letters*, p. 128.
95. Eleanor Christian, in Stoddard, pp. 285–86.
96. Eleanor Christian, in Stoddard, p. 270.
97. *Recollections of Writers*, p. 320.
98. Fitzgerald, *Life*, II, 102.
99. Forster, I, 137 (Book II, ch. 8).
100. *Wills Letters*, p. 35. Cf. Kitton, *Life*, p. 186.
101. *Living Age*, CCLXI, 96.
102. Forster, II, 220 and 221 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
103. Straus, pp. 239–40. Cf. p. 269.
104. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 141.

105. Clayden, II, 214.
106. *Leaves from a Life*, p. 145.
107. *Life and Adventures*, I, 381–82.
108. Mrs. Whiffen (*Keeping Off the Shelf*, pp. 53–54) tells an amusing story concerning Mrs. Dickens's jealousy. Ellen Ternan is the girl Mrs. Whiffen refers to as 'Dickens's god-daughter.'
109. *This Side Idolatry*, ch. 18.
110. Lyndon Orr, 'Charles Dickens as a Husband,' *Bookman* (New York) XXIII (1906), 14–17.
111. *London Tribune*, 3 Feb. 1906.
112. *Beadnell Letters*, pp. 147–48.
113. The letter (28 May, 1858) printed in the *New York Tribune*, I of course make no attempt to defend. This letter was never intended for publication, but was given to Arthur Smith, to be used privately, at his discretion, for the correction of rumors. Smith recklessly showed the letter to a *Tribune* correspondent, and the cat was out. In the 'Personal' statement, Dickens had carefully refrained from anything that might wound Mrs. Dickens's feelings: here there was a frank discussion of their difficulties that should never have been made public. This Dickens himself felt as strongly as any one, and he always referred to this communication as the 'violated' letter. Only, as Frank T. Marzials long ago remarked, 'the wrong went deeper than the publication. The letter should never have been written, certainly never sent to Arthur Smith for general perusal. Dickens's only excuse is the fact that he was clearly not himself at the time, and that he never fell into a like error again.' (*Life of Dickens*, p. 138). The 'Personal' statement and the violated letter are both reprinted in *Ley's Annotated Forster*, pp. 680–83.
114. Dickens did hate some members of the Hogarth family: there is no doubt of that. Cf. *Beadnell Letters*, p. 144. Ward says Dickens and his wife corresponded occasionally after the separation, but on the one occasion when I find him under necessity of communicating with her, he does it indirectly, through his eldest son. (Int. to *Pickwick Papers*, Macmillan ed., p. xxix.)
115. *Leaves from a Life*, p. 143.
116. Shore, p. 262. Sir Henry Fielding Dickens wrote the *London*

Tribune (Feb. 5, 1906) that Dickens's love letters to his wife were still in existence and in his own possession.

117. *Letters*, p. 524.
118. Arthur Hood, 'Charles Dickens and Love,' *Dickensian*, XI, 265–69, argues, not wholly convincingly, that love as a grand passion was a thing Dickens never experienced, understood, or portrayed.
119. Forster, I, 219 (Book III, ch. 4).

CHAPTER VII: SPEECH OF THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

1. *Ley's Annotated Forster*, p. xvii.
2. *Charles Dickens, A Biography from New Sources*, pp. xiii–xiv.
3. Cf. Forster, II, 203 (Book VIII, ch. 1).
4. *Letters*, p. 64 (to T. Mitton, 1844).
5. Mr. Alfred Hubbard Holt made an elaborate 'Study of the Use of Intoxicating Liquors in Dickens's Novels,' in a Master's dissertation for the University of Chicago, 1926.
6. *Kolle Letters*, p. 60.
7. *Collins Letters*, p. 76.
8. *Letters*, p. 101 (to C. Felton).
9. *Letters*, p. 337.
10. Emerson, *The Early Years of the Saturday Club*, p. 437.
11. *Tit-Bits*, 2 Sept. 1882. Quoted by Kitton, *Dickensiana*, p. 484.
12. *My Father As I Recall Him*, p. 15.
13. Dolby, p. 18.
14. *Fifty Years of London Life*, p. 291.
15. *Bookman* (New York), LIII, 50.
16. *Living Age*, CCCXIX, 139.
17. *Yesterdays with Authors*, p. 167.
18. Howe, p. 154.
19. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil*, p. 141.
20. Letter of 13 Oct. 1842. MS., Harvard University Library.
21. Fitzgerald, *Life*, I, 141. The words are Fitzgerald's.
22. Perkins, p. 125.
23. *Kolle Letters*, p. 41.
24. Forster, I, 256 (Book III, ch. 6).
25. Forster, I, 82 (Book II, ch. 1).

26. Forster, I, 31 (Book I, ch. 2). Cf. *Works*, XIV, 192 (*David Copperfield*, ch. 11).
27. Hughes, p. 91.
28. Shore, pp. 105–06.
29. *Lectures and Essays*, II, 187.
30. *Works*, XXXIII, 432. (See also other passages in the sixth division of *Master Humphrey's Clock*.)
31. In an article in the London *Daily Chronicle*, March 18, 1912, Mrs. Warren, an old servant of Maria Beadnell Winter, suggested that this element in Clennam's disillusion, like others, was drawn from Dickens's experience with her mistress.
32. *Works*, XXVII, 175–76 (*Sketches by Boz*, ch. 12).
33. *Works*, XXIV, 141 (Book III, ch. 10).
34. *Works*, XXVIII, 227 (ch. 14).
35. *Works*, XXIX, 301 (ch. 25).
36. *Works*, XXXI, 175 (*Christmas Stories*).
37. *Works*, XXIX, 420–21 (ch. 37).
38. *Works*, XXXV, 349 (*Miscellaneous Papers*).
39. *Works*, XXXVI, 72–73 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'The Great Baby').
40. Forster, II, 13 (Book VI, ch. 1).
41. Forster, II, 45–47 (Book VI, ch. 3); *Works*, XXVI (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Scenes,' ch. 22); *Works*, XXXV (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Cruikshank's "The Drunkard's Children" ').
42. Forster, II, 47 (Book VI, ch. 3).
43. Perkins, p. 176.
44. *Works*, XVI, 229 (*Bleak House*, ch. 14).
45. *Works*, XXXIV, 61 (*Reprinted Pieces*).
46. Forster, II, 283 (Book VIII, ch. 7).
47. Forster, II, 387 (Book X, ch. 2).
48. Nicoll, p. 86.
49. *Letters*, p. 682.
50. Howe, pp. 171–72.
51. Coggeshall, II, p. 52.
52. *Works*, XXI, 97 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book I, ch. 5).
53. *Oliver Twist*, Preface to Third Edition.
54. Wilkins, p. 210.
55. Huxley, p. 326.

56. Compton, p. 195.
57. *Works*, v, 71–72 (*Nickleby*, ch. 37).
58. From Hone's *Diary*. Quoted by Wilkins, p. 167.
59. Payne, p. 37.
60. *Lippincott's Magazine*, LIII, 339.
61. Howe, p. 146.
62. *Scribner's Magazine*, LIII, 501.
63. Field, *Memories of Many Men and Some Women*, pp. 185–86.
64. Stoddard, pp. 280, 283.
65. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil*, pp. 154–55.
66. Fitzgerald, *Memories*, pp. 48–49.
67. Forster, I, 447 (Book V, ch. 5).
68. Straus, pp. 245–46.
69. *Works*, IX, 501–03 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 60).
70. *Works*, XXIII, 7 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book I, ch. 2).
71. *Works*, IX, 5 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 31).
72. *Works*, XXV, 40 (*Hard Times*, Book I, ch. 6).
73. *Works*, VI, 378 (ch. 19). For further references, see *Works*, VIII, 283 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 17); XXVI, 19, 24, 50 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Our Parish,' chs. 3, 4, 7); 112 ('Scenes,' ch. 9); 352 ('Tales,' ch. 1); XXVII, 256 (*Sketches of Young Couples*, Dedication), 401 ('Some Particulars Concerning a Lion'); XXVIII, 205 (*American Notes*, ch. 12); 403 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'By Verona, Mantua, and Milan . . .'); XXXI, 286 (*Christmas Stories*, 'The Haunted House,' 1); XXXII (*Christmas Stories*, 'Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings,' ch. 1); XXXVI, 264 (*The Strange Gentleman*, Act I, sc. 1).
74. *Letters*, p. 145 (1845).
75. *Speeches, Letters, and Sayings*, p. 108.
76. *Letters*, p. 224 (to H. Bicknell, 1850).
77. Stoddard, pp. 278–79.
78. Kitton, *Pen and Pencil*, p. 182.
79. Kate Field, p. 61.
80. Forster, II, 215 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
81. *Mary Boyle: Her Book*, p. 234.
82. *Fifty Years of London Life*, p. 285.
83. *Recollections of Writers*, p. 301.
84. R. H. Horne, in Hotten, p. 105.

85. *Letters*, p. 133 (to Mrs. Dickens, 1844).
86. Payn, p. 175.
87. *Wills Letters*, p. 164.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 288–89.
90. Macready, *Diaries*, II, 74 (16 Aug. 1840).
91. Dolby, p. 388.
92. *Bookman* (New York), LIII, 52.
93. Stoddard, p. 273.
94. Shore, p. 212.
95. Cf. Kitton, *Life*, pp. 62–64; T. P. Cooper, *With Dickens in Yorkshire*, p. 37; Dexter, *Charles Dickens*, p. 37; Clark, *Dickens and the Yorkshire Schools*.
96. Fitzgerald, *Life*, II, 129.
97. Kitton, *Life*, p. 191.
98. Forster, II, 112 (Book VI, ch. 7).
99. Kent, pp. 263–64.
100. *Things and People*, I, 76–77.
101. Kitton, *Dickensiana*, pp. 418–19.
102. Kitton, *Life*, p. 129.
103. *Works*, XXXV, 57 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Adelaide Anne Procter').
104. *Works*, XXXI, 157 (*Christmas Stories*).
105. *Works*, IV, 374–75 (ch. 24).
106. Cf. Mrs. Skewton, in *Dombey and Son*, chs. 27, 28.
107. *Speeches*, pp. 305, 307.
108. Cf. *Works*, I, 472 (*Pickwick*, ch. 29); XVIII, 9 (*Christmas Carol*, I).
109. Forster, I, 426 (Book V, ch. 3).
110. *Works*, XXVIII, 338 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'Genoa and its Neighborhood').
111. *Letters*, p. 90 (to D. Jerrold, 1843).
112. *Works*, VIII, 495 (ch. 29).
113. *Works*, VIII, 414 (ch. 24); IX, 255 (ch. 47).
114. 'The Poetry of Science.'
115. *Works*, XX, 295 (*Little Dorrit*, ch. 21).
116. *Works*, XVIII, 227 (*Cricket on the Hearth*, II).
117. *Works*, XXV, 147 (*Hard Times*, Book II, ch. 3).

118. *Works*, XXXIII, 16–17 (*Edwin Drood*, ch. 2).
119. *Works*, II, 182–84 (ch. 39).
120. *Works*, XXVIII, 383 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'To Parma,' etc.).
121. Ritchie, *Thackeray and His Daughter*, p. 51.
122. Cowden-Clarke, *Recollections*, p. 324.
123. *Works*, VI, 448 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 22).
124. *Works*, VI, 145 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 8).
125. *Works*, VI, 165 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 9).
126. *Works*, III, 205 (*Oliver Twist*, ch. 23).
127. *Works*, XIX, 511 (*Little Dorrit*, Book I, ch. 35).
128. *Works*, XIX, 216 (*Little Dorrit*, Book II, ch. 15).
129. *Works*, XXVII, 267–68 (*Sketches of Young Couples*, 'The Formal Couple').
130. *Works*, XX, 25–26 (*Little Dorrit*, Book II, ch. 2). See also Book II, chs. 5, 15, 19.
131. *Works*, XXXIII, 281 (*Edwin Drood*, ch. 22).
132. *Works*, XXIII, 158 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book I, ch. 11).
133. *Works*, XVI, 287 (*Bleak House*, ch. 17).
134. *Works*, XXV, 82–83 (Book I, ch. 11).
135. 'The Murdered Person.'
136. *Works*, XVI, 58 (*Bleak House*, ch. 5).
137. *Works*, IX, 334 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 50).
138. *Works*, XXXV, 264 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'The Sunday Screw').
139. *Works*, XXXV, 311 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Railway Strikes').
140. *Works*, XXXV, 316 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Railway Strikes').
141. Cf. *Works*, XXXV, 30–51 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Capital Punishment'); XXI, 3 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book I, ch. 1); XXI, 59 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book II, ch. 1); *Letters*, p. 141 (to M. Napier, 1845); pp. 200–01 (to the editor of the *Times*, 1849). Cf. also the study of hangman psychology in *Barnaby Rudge*.
142. Cf. in this connection, two articles in *The Dickensian:* J. Cuming Walters, 'Foreign War or Home Reform,' XI (1915), 201–08, and W. W. Crotch, 'Dickens and War Muddles,' XI, 229–33.
143. *Works*, XXXV, 466 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'On Strike').
144. *Speeches*, p. 158.
145. *Letters*, p. 345 (to Mrs. Watson, 1854); p. 353 (to M. de Cerjat, 1855).

146. Macready, *Diaries*, I, 504.
147. *Letters*, p. 590 (to M. de Cerjat, 1865).
148. Forster, I, 210 (Book III, ch. 3).
149. Forster, I, 207 (Book III, ch. 3).
150. Wilkins, pp. 241–44.
151. MacKenzie, *Life*, extra six pages at the end.
152. Forster, II, 253 (Book VIII, ch. 4).
153. *Ley's Annotated Forster*, pp. 98–99, p. 118, p. 318.
154. Forster, I, 98 (Book II, ch. 3).
155. *Theodore Roosevelt's Letters to His Children* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1919), pp. 219–21.
156. Oliphant, *John Tulloch*, p. 25.
157. *Harper's Magazine*, XXV, 379.
158. *Life of Charles Lever*, I, 228. For reconciliation, cf. II, 136 n.
159. For Yates's own account of the matter, see his *Fifty Years of London Life*, ch. 9.
160. Ley, *Dickens Circle*, p. 80.
161. Hotten, p. 76. *Ley's Annotated Forster*, p. 695, p. 711.
162. Ley, *Dickens Circle*, p. 151.
163. *Ley's Annotated Forster*, p. 545.
164. *Letters*, p. 470 (to B. Jerrold, 1858).
165. Now included in *Miscellaneous Papers*.

CHAPTER VIII: THE MAN AND HIS SOUL

1. Cf. *Works*, XXIX, 415 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 36).
2. Cf. Forster, II, 421 (Book XI, ch. 3).
3. *Letters*, p. 473 (to F. Stone, 1858).
4. *Letters*, p. 576 (to M. de Cerjat, 1864).
5. *Pictures of Travel*, p. 272.
6. Kitton, *Dickensiana*, p. 21.
7. Forster, II, 421 (Book XI, ch. 3). The prayer which Dickens composed upon the death of his infant daughter Dora is too long to quote here, but his simple Christian faith is eloquently expressed in it. It may be read in the *Living Age*, CCLXI (1909), 96–97.
8. Forster, II, 421 (Book XI, ch. 3).
9. Forster, II, 422.

10. *Works*, IX, 471 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 68).
11. *Essays on Books* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1914), p. 183.
12. *Works*, XXI, 389 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III, ch. 11).
13. Forster, I, 263 (Book III, ch. 7). Cf. also *Letters*, p. 14 (Diary, Jan. 14, 1838) and pp. 49–50 (to Mrs. Hogarth, 1841).
14. *Works*, VIII, 276 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 16).
15. Forster, I, 413 (Book V, ch. 2).
16. *Works*, I, 354 (*Pickwick Papers*, ch. 22).
17. George Gissing points out as evidence for Dickens's real reverence, that his religious pretenders are never permitted to use sacred names and phrases. Cf. *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study*, p. 140.
18. *Letters*, p. 92 (to Dickson, 1843).
19. Forster, I, 153 (Book II, ch. 10).
20. Forster, II, 421 (Book XI, ch. 3). Cf. *Works*, XXVIII, 86 (*American Notes*, ch. 5).
21. *Works*, XXIX, 42 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 4).
22. *Works*, XXXIV, 328 (*Reprinted Pieces*, 'Sunday Under Three Heads,' I).
23. *Works*, VI, 203 (*Martin Chuzzlewit*, ch. 11).
24. *Works*, XVII, 250 (*Bleak House*, ch. 47).
25. *New York Tribune*, Oct. 7, 1883.
26. *Works*, I, xiv, xv.
27. *Works*, III, 430 (*Oliver Twist*, ch. 46); *Works*, XII, 266 (*Barnaby Rudge*, ch. 25); *Works*, XXVIII, 51 (*American Notes*, ch. 3); *Works*, XXV, 292 (*Hard Times*, Book III, ch. 6); *Works*, XXIX, 41–42 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 4).
28. *Works*, XXXII, 13 (*Christmas Stories*, 'Mugby Junction,' ch. 2).
29. *Works*, XXXIV, 344 (*Reprinted Pieces*, 'Sunday Under Three Heads').
30. *Works*, XXVI, 16 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Our Parish,' ch. 3).
31. *Works*, XXVII, 157 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Tales,' ch. 11).
32. *Works*, XII, 148 (ch. 13).
33. *Works*, XVI, 19 (*Bleak House*, ch. 3).
34. *David Copperfield*, ch. 4.
35. *Works*, XXV, 428.

36. *Works*, XIX, 36, 43, 61 (*Little Dorrit*, Book I, chs. 4, 5).
37. Cf. 'Sunday Under Three Heads,' published in 1836, and reprinted in *Reprinted Pieces*, and 'The Sunday Screw,' in *Miscellaneous Papers*.
38. Forster, I, 464 (Book V, ch. 7).
39. Cf. the account of his taking James T. Fields to Canterbury Cathedral, in *Yesterdays with Authors*, p. 221.
40. *Works*, XXIX, 97 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 9).
41. *Works*, XXIX, 40, 44–45 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 4).
42. Howe, p. 170.
43. Forster, I, 297 (Book IV, ch. 1). Cf. *Letters*, p. 43 (to an unnamed correspondent, 1841); *Letters*, p. 98 (to Macvey Napier, 1843).
44. *Works*, I, 439 (*Pickwick Papers*, ch. 27).
45. *Works*, XXXV, 133 ('The Niger Expedition,' in *Miscellaneous Papers*).
46. *Letters*, p. 270 (to an unnamed correspondent, 1852).
47. *Works*, XXVIII, 208 (*American Notes*, ch. 12).
48. *Works*, XXIX, 16 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 2); XXIV, 121–22 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book III, ch. 9). Fagin in *Oliver Twist* involves no anti-Semitic prejudice on Dickens's part. See his letter, July 10, 1863 (*Letters*, p. 563), to a 'Jewish lady,' later identified as Mrs. Eliza Davis. Cf. *Ley's Annotated Forster*, p. 744.
49. *Works*, XXVIII, 462 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'Rome'); XXVI, 155 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Scenes,' ch. 15).
50. *Works*, II, 277 (ch. 45).
51. *Works*, X, 238 (ch. 22).
52. *Works*, VIII, 254 (ch. 15).
53. *Works*, XVI, 316 (ch. 19).
54. Dickens's sister Fanny, whom he dearly loved, became after her marriage a pronounced Evangelical of the more rigid sort. Fitzgerald (*Life*, II, 79) thinks that her religious experience made a deep impression on her brother, and it is evident from Forster's account (II, 83–Book VI, ch. 6) that he was greatly touched by her piety and fortitude when he visited her shortly before her death. Her pastor, the Reverend James Griffin, of Manchester, told the story of her religious experience in his *Memories of the*

Past, 1883, which is fully summarized by Robertson Nicoll, *Dickens's Own Story*, pp. 93–118.

55. For Spiritism, see in *Miscellaneous Papers* the following titles: 'The Spirit Business,' 'Rather a Strong Dose,' 'Stories for the First of April,' and 'Well Authenticated Rappings.' Cf. *Works*, XXI, 2 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book I, ch. 1); XXXI, 276 (*Christmas Stories*, 'The Haunted House,' 1); Forster, II, 446–47 (Book XI, ch. 3).
56. *Works*, XXVIII, 256–57 (*American Notes*, ch. 15).
57. *Works*, XXVIII, 89 (*American Notes*, ch. 5).
58. *Works*, XXVIII, p. 269.
59. *Works*, XII, vii–viii ('Preface to the Third Volume of "Master Humphrey's Clock" Comprising "Barnaby Rudge"').
60. *Works*, XXVIII, 381 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'To Parma,' etc.).
61. *Works*, XXVIII, 442 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'Rome').
62. *Works*, XXVIII, 481 (*Pictures from Italy*, 'Rome').
63. *Works*, XXVIII, 482.
64. *Speeches, Letters, and Sayings*, p. 108.
65. *Works*, XXIV, 309 (Book IV, ch. 4).
66. *Works*, XXVIII, vii.
67. Forster, I, 428 (Book V, ch. 3). Cf. I, 452 (Book V, ch. 6).
68. *Letters*, p. 710 (to M. de Cerjat, 1869).
69. *Works*, XIII, 90 (*Barnaby Rudge*, ch. 51).
70. *Works*, X, 348 (*Old Curiosity Shop*, ch. 32).
71. Forster, I, 354 (Book IV, ch. 5); Roberts, *This Side Idolatry*, p. 350.
72. Forster, I, 355 (Book III, ch. 5).
73. Forster, II, 225 (Book VIII, ch. 2); *Works*, II, 331 (*Nicholas Nickleby*, ch. 53).
74. *Works*, XXVII, 38 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Tales,' ch. 5).
75. Marzials, p. 158.
76. *Letters*, p. 561 (to M. de Cerjat, 1863).
77. *Letters*, p. 575 (to M. de Cerjat, 1864).
78. *Works*, XXXV, 49–50 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Capital Punishment').
79. *Works*, XX, 455 (*Little Dorrit*, Book II, ch. 31).
80. *Letters*, pp. 473–74 (1858).

81. Howe, pp. 167–68.
82. *Works*, XXIII, 174 (*Our Mutual Friend*, Book I, ch. 11).
83. Forster, I, 230 (Book III, ch. 4).
84. *Works*, XXXV, 49–50 (*Miscellaneous Papers*, 'Capital Punishment').
85. *Works*, IX, 131–32 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 39).
86. *Works*, XVI, 439 (*Bleak House*, ch. 25).
87. *Atlantic Monthly*, XXVI, 480.
88. For Dickens's familiarity with the Bible, cf. James S. Stevens, 'Dickens's Use of the English Bible,' *Dickensian*, XXI, 32–34, 93–95, 152–57, 214–18. Mr. Stevens concludes: 'In going over these nearly 250 Biblical quotations one is impressed with the fact that Dickens uses the simpler and more frequently quoted Scriptural passages rather than those that are more profound in their meaning.'
89. *Works*, XV, 157 (ch. 39).
90. *Works*, XIV, 43 (ch. 3).
91. *Works*, XXXII, 398 (*Christmas Stories*, 'Lazy Tour,' ch. 2).
92. *Works*, XXVIII, 238 (*American Notes*, ch. 14).
93. *Works*, XXI, 435 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III, ch. 15).
94. *Works*, XVII, 523 (ch. 67).
95. *Works*, IX, 55 (*Dombey and Son*, ch. 33).
96. Cf. *Works*, II, 231 (ch. 42); 282 (ch. 45); 314 (ch. 47).
97. *Works*, II, 394–95 (ch. 52).
98. *Dombey and Son*, ch. 59.
99. *Works*, XVII, 81 (*Bleak House*, ch. 36).
100. *Works*, XVIII, 283 (*Cricket on the Hearth*, III).
101. *Works*, XXII, 461 (*Great Expectations*, ch. 49).
102. *Works*, XXXII, 57 and 69 (*Christmas Stories*, 'Mrs. Lirriper's Legacy').
103. *Works*, XVIII, 518 (*The Haunted Man*).
104. *Works*, XI, 182–83.
105. *Works*, XI, 382–83 (ch. 72).
106. *Letters*, p. 747 (to John Makeham, 1870).
107. *Letters*, pp. 545–46 (to Mrs. Austin, 1862). Cf. letter to Lemon, 1851, p. 237.

108. For Dickens's restlessness, cf. Forster, II, 219 (Book VIII, ch. 2); *North American Review*, CLX, 684; Kitton, *Life*, p. 265.
109. *Works*, XXI, 437 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III, ch. 15).
110. *Works*, XXVI, 235 (*Sketches by Boz*, 'Scenes,' ch. 25).
111. Forster, II, 272 (Book VIII, ch. 6).
112. Forster, II, 458 (Book XII, ch. 1).
113. Jerrold, p. 14. Cf. also *Works*, XXXIV, 14 (*Reprinted Pieces*, 'The Long Voyage').
114. *Works*, XXIX, 77–79 (*The Uncommercial Traveller*, ch. 7).
115. *Letters*, p. 725 (to Edmund Ollier, 1869).
116. *My Father As I Recall Him*, p. 237.
117. Cowden-Clarke, p. 334.
118. Kitton, *Life*, p. 339.
119. *Letters*, p. 14.
120. Forster, II, 440 (Book XI, ch. 3).
121. Forster, II, 221–22 (Book VIII, ch. 2).
122. *Works*, XXI, 368 (*A Tale of Two Cities*, Book III, ch. 9).
123. *The Pitiful Wife* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), p. 310.
124. Works, XXX, 234 (ch. 22).
125. *Works*, XXVIII, 259 (*American Notes*, ch. 15).
126. Shelton MacKenzie, p. 243.
127. Shelton MacKenzie, p. 339.
128. *The Pitiful Wife*, p. 233.

APPENDIX

Gamaliel Bradford's studies in psychography consist of the following volumes. Unless otherwise specified, the publisher in each case is Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

Lee the American, 1912.
Confederate Portraits, 1914.
Union Portraits, 1916.
Portraits of Women, 1916.
A Naturalist of Souls. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1917. New edition, revised, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926. (Collects material written between 1888 and 1913 and arranges it

so as to show the gradual development of the psychographic method.)

Portraits of American Women, 1919.

American Portraits, 1875–1900, 1922.

Damaged Souls, 1923.

The Soul of Samuel Pepys, 1924.

Bare Souls. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924.

Wives. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1925.

Darwin, 1926.

D. L. Moody: A Worker in Souls. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927.

The Haunted Biographer: Dialogues of the Dead. Seattle: University of Washington Book Store, 1927.

Life and I: An Autobiography of Humanity, 1928.

As God Made Them, 1929.

The following are Mr. Bradford's own most important discussions of his art:

'Psychography,' in *A Naturalist of Souls*.

'Lee and Psychography,' in *Lee the American*.

'A Clue to the Labyrinth of Souls,' in *Bare Souls*.

'Confessions of a Biographer,' in *Wives*.

'The Art of Biography,' *Saturday Review of Literature*, I (1925), 769–70.

Robert B. Macdougall, 'The Soul of Man in Gamaliel Bradford's Eyes,' *Boston Evening Transcript*, September 26, 1925. (Long and significant interview with Mr. Bradford.)

1. Cf., for a discussion of the problem involved, my review-article, 'Golden Days and Gray,' *Virginia Quarterly Review*, IV (1927), 589–600.
2. *Yale Review*, XVII (1928), 227–45.
3. *Portraits of Women*, p. x.
4. *Saturday Review of Literature*, I (1925), 769.
5. *A Naturalist of Souls*, pp. 14–15.
6. Quoted in *Bare Souls*, p. 2.
7. Quoted in *Bare Souls*, p. 56.

8. Quoted in *Lee the American*, p. 279.
9. *Speeches*, p. 308.
10. *The Soul of Samuel Pepys*, p. ix.
11. *Damaged Souls*, pp. 3–4.
12. *Keats and Shakespeare* (London, Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 2.

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